Net Working/Networking: Citizen Initiated Internet Politics

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TAPIO HÄYHTIÖ AND JARMO RINNE[1]

Introduction: Seeking the citizenry on the Internet – Emerging virtual creativity

THE CHANGING SCOPE OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political participation is undergoing a profound change throughout the world. Development hints that politics seems to pervade from institutions to people's daily living, from nation-state to global and local level. Politics has disembedded from structural frameworks and moved to a networked society facilitated by computer-mediated communication (CMC). As a result of this evolution, the new media is taking more and more visible role regarding to political communication and activity. The Internet is viewed as a tool, channel and forum enabling citizens to make an impact on social, cultural and political change. In the process, civic empowerment through the Internet emerges in people's everyday lives. The Internet is a powerful medium for gathering coalitions and organising mobilisations of all kinds. It also transforms political styles and types of activities.

Traditionally, we have been told, by politicians as well as political scientists, politics is an instrument for distributing good (and bad) in communities. The scope of politics is in finding solutions and resolving the conflicting views within communities, allocating values with legitimate authority, organising the changes and directions of communal life. Politics is, thus, governing and an organised attempt to bring order in a pluralistic chaos. (See for instance Arendt 1958; Beetham 1991; Keane 1998.)

1. Both authors have contributed equally to this article.

Along with the movement of politics to a networked society, there are traces of a new orientation in political science research; the shift of studies is increasingly taking into account the activity by the people instead of activity for the people. This change has also had a profound effect on the notion of citizenship. In previous decades political citizenship was, in principal**,** reduced to the right to vote in elections. Participation through voting had been regarded as a sufficient condition for democratic governance in some influential commentaries (for instance Downs 1957). However, electoral participation has decreased all around the world in liberal democracies (for the definition, see Held 1997, 81; Heywood 2004, 225-227) and political culture is taking steps along the path towards a more reciprocal and interactive participation process. A revised paradigm encompassing political citizenship along with the notion that people should "*have a voice during electoral periods, too*', has been introduced by many political scientists in various models. Versions of participatory democracy models have been developed to generate a greater involvement and say in decisions concerning the position of citizenry and the future shape of communal life. At the same time**,** along with this ongoing participatory evolution citizens' own activism to initiate spontaneous/voluntary civic activity groups and get involved in public matters and discussions has also increased. This self-made *do-it-yourself*-activity takes a contrary stand to the earlier top-down electoral mode of democracy. The forms and forums along with the concept of political activity and participation are changing, and it is causing controversial implications – actionist and administrational consequences. Citizens' activism in forming groups to express opinions and attitudes is part of the process linked to evolutionary democratic change.

The prevailing form of political rule in liberal democracies is the representative model, in which people have the right to elect political rulers to make public decisions for them. The very idea of representation therefore recognises the dilemma between the government and the governed. The formal procedure of selecting the representatives is through periodical elections. Thus, the representation suggests that an individual, or group, can stand for a larger group of likeminded people (Heywood 2004, 233) mirroring their ideas, values, and opinions in political decision-making. However, the representative model

of democratic participation has been a target of serious criticism. It has been criticised as not being a microcosm of society at all. To put it simply, according to critics representatives are not representing all segments of societal groupings in proportion to their size**;** elected politicians tend not to resemble the population in terms of schooling, social class, professional status etc. (ibid., 233). It has also been pointed out, that electoral participation imply but a limited periodical involvement in political life for ordinary people during the campaigns and through voting. Intermediate times between elections are mute in terms of civic involvement. A focal point should be, whether this amount of participation is enough in terms of *democratic* governance to be thoroughly democratic and accountable? People are choosing between candidates in elections, not necessarily (and in fact hardly ever) between different policies. Thus, in elections the selection of the personnel is in focus, not the future lines of political action. In practise, the idea of Dahlian *procedural democracy* in which *demos* should have an enlightened understanding of political issues to be to able to participate effectively (Dahl 1997, 111-112), is seldom present in campaign rallies. The rhetoric of candidates is opaque and obscure and tends to avoid clear-cut political pledges or policy-linings.

So, what do we have to offer instead of electoral democracy, then? In recent decades we have witnessed the emergence of civic empowerment through the Internet. The varieties of political activity and participation have stretched beyond the reach of traditional party and association-oriented politics. This development is by no means accidental, rather it is synchronized coincidence. Instead of involving into traditional politics, political activity and commitment is being replaced with individually oriented working sketches of the 'new politics', which creates new kinds of unequalled political communities from below, which acknowledge no borders of any kind. The span of cyber-activism has expanded into the fields of e-democracy, citizens' panel, user-generated communication, information warfare, security and e-crimes. The politics of the Internet is a politics of many actors, many levels, and actions of a heterogeneous multitude.

Linked to the political transformation two rather different approaches to political citizenship and participation have entered the stage in western liberal democracies. The discussions concerning civic

participation can be labelled either as *administrational* or *actionist* approaches. The first mentioned aims to create and rationalise the practices of participation from above (e.g. the planning of land use and urban construction and good governance practices). Various attempts to increase citizens' participation in the political decision-making processes have been launched by modern democratic governments. The main challenge in such efforts is to establish influential and empowering mechanisms for the expression of a separate judgement" by interested people with respect to their elected representatives. The basic problem of these efforts are crystallised in the contrast existing between the notions of "representative" and "participatory" democracy. Activities (actions) in politics are in many senses brought about by the sensitive balance of mobilising from above and participating from below. The crucial question then is: *How much immediate participation by citizens to influence the political/public matters should there be*? (See Molinari; Lehtonen; Calenda & Meijer and Vromen in this volume).

The second approach takes an opposite stand, when compared to the earlier approach. The focus in this second approach is to self-initiate alternative meanings and practices from below. To do so, active people are creating interpretative frames to understand and portray their own political activities. Through and within such frames actors are constantly and interactively reflecting on a mixture of different motivational stimuli, that consist of actors' understanding regarding their own activities; interpretations of their aims and relevant means to achieve their goals; and lessons learned from past action in relation to future expectations. Thus, self-initiated frames are used to make sense of new opportunities and challenges as they arise (see Vromen; Gillan; Häyhtiö & Rinne; Rättilä and Baringhorst in this volume). The distinction between the actionists and the administrational approaches is explicit. In the administrational approach public authorities are involving citizens in decision-making, but contrary to this the citizens in the actionist approach are active somewhere other than in the traditional sphere of institutionally organised participation.

So, the contemporary milieu of political action and participation has fractured into a diverse, complex multi-spatial network in which several controversial motivational drives; re-scaled political priorities; manners and styles of making an impact are emerging. In this political

jungle the value of individualism and post-materialism (see Inglehart 1997, 35) are hailed, and the significance and sensibility of political participation springs not only from the impact and consequences of the action but also from the participative action itself. This individualised political empowerment could potentially cause the renaissance of personalised politicisation and might be the cure for the perceived political apathy troubling modern societies. People claim to win back their authenticity and autonomy through the process of individualisation's privilege of becoming "who one really is" and autonomy as the privilege to "be one's own person". The purpose in this is to enable people to use their own talents to bridge the gap between what they are and what they want to be.

The indubitable danger in such understanding emphasising the importance of individualism, is that society is seen merely as a matrix of atomistic free agents moving from one position or coalition to another. To avoid the lurking risk of extreme individualism, it is vital to bear in mind that the emancipation of individuals and collectives as well, comes from what they are enabled, or feel to able, to do reflexively for themselves and (or) for their societies. The major incentive in any political activities is to make an impact on public issues. The motivation explaining people's postmaterial engagement may be a bit different from the motives behind electoral participation. Involvement and activity in general, in individualised politics is not based on ideological differences nor on the traditional attachment to a certain class, or group membership. Rather is it motivated by the self-narrated and subjectively felt problems of everyday life that generate different personal political homes for each actor, and are motivated by personal interests and aims. This view is in concert with the old Aristotelian idea of politics, in which people as social beings produce a good life for a community to be able to live a good life**.**

FROM ONE-WAY MASS MEDIA TO DIGITAL NETWORKS

When analysing the relationship of political participation to publicness in more detail, it is quite easily noticeable that since the 1980's "old democracy", public spheres have gone through significant expansions

and transformations, which have affected the culture of political participation. The exponential growth of commercial media and digital communication and the acceleration of globalisation have had great influences on the change. (Keane 2000, Kellner 2000.) Modernised societies have become media societies in which new interactive media and communication modes (the Internet, mobile phones, Digital-TV) extend the media landscape of traditional one-way mass media (newspapers, radio, TV). People increasingly spend their time using the media, and perceive their glocalised environment through the media and product media contents alone (see Calenda & Meijer; Lehtonen and Mosca in this volume).

The multiplicity of networked spaces of communication has broken down mass media's hegemonic position in mediating political publicness (see Baringhorst; Häyhtiö & Rinne in this volume). The practices of political public life have also been disentangled efficiently from public institutions and state territories by the fracturing networks. A useful heuristic tool for analysing the political features of public spheres and fluid media environments – which suits the Internet well – comes from civil society researcher John Keane. He divides publicness into three different categories of spheres: *micro-, meso- and macro-public spheres*, which practically permeate each other. Political micro-spheres emerge, when people encounter each other and dispute about controversial issues. A micro-public sphere is a space, generated between groups of civil society as well as single individuals, where public deliberation is conducted, opposing views confront each other and existing standpoints and interpretations are challenged by bringing forth alternative stances in the political playground. In Keane's model the notion of a meso-public sphere resembles traditional mass media which frame spaces of public debate for millions of potential spectators, listeners and readers mainly in nation-states. The agenda of a meso-sphere is filtered and edited, which means that it is not formulated in horizontal civic communications. The concept of a macro-public sphere refers to a globalised field of publicness, in which the most important actors are transnational media companies. (Keane 2000; Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007.)

When following Keane's line of thinking, we can understand how Internet publicness has become a tool, channel and resource for

political influence. The accessibility of www browsers in the 1990's created a setting for the notion of *Web 1.0* that refers to easy-to-use computer-mediated communication (CMC). The expanding growth in the capacity of computing devices, software and data transfer led to the final breakthrough of the Internet and multiplied the number of users. The Internet became a graphic environment in which people can consume, publish content freely, create sites and communities, seek linked information, "surf" from one place to another, entertain themselves, conduct politics and meet people. (Walch 1999, 39-49; Chadwick 2006, 45-47.) In CMC the most significant political feature is *de-medialization*, which refers to the fracturing mediator role of mass media and the emergence of horizontal communication. As the Internet expanded, new styles of communication activism arose, because it was impossible to control them and anybody could try to bring matters to public discussion. (Walch 1999, 67-75.) Web 1.0 styles of communication enable bi-directional change of information between different actors in political scenery. It is well suited for various organisations' purposes to distribute their strategies, aims and modes of action and launch interactive discussions among those related to these activities (see Mosca; Vromen; Gillan; Molinari; Paltemaa, Lappalainen and Baringhorst in this volume)

Studies considering citizen initiated politics have shown a growing interest in the paradigm shift in the political use of the Internet – labelled as a politics of *Web 2.0*. The notion of Web 2.0 encompasses sites based on user-generated content, networking and sharing. (Wyld 2007; Lehtonen; Jordan; Häyhtiö & Rinne; Hintikka and Rättilä in this volume.) Today, the services and applications offered by the Internet are largely commercial but this has not hindered spontaneous political civic activity in emerging onto the platforms of social media. In fact, it is understood that Web 2.0 sites in general are transforming the Internet into a mode of space where users do not simply discuss but do things together (O'Reilly 2005). It presents an Internet where contents are created and shaped by networking individuals. (Wyld 2007, 43-44; Chadwick 2006, 8.) In user-generated content production individuals themselves control creation processes by developing, classifying, architecting or evaluating Web content. Indeed, Web 2.0 sites can be defined as peer-to-peer media, in which collectivities

consist of the choices of individuals to connect to platforms and to act voluntarily in them. (O'Reilly 2005.) Web communities can also manifest sources of collective political activity when swarming and meshworking individuals visit interesting websites and hubs to solve problems or attain shared aims or orientations. The multitude of individuals may grow into a politically effective force by uniting. By meshworking the swarming effect turns the plurality into unity (cf. Osterweil 2004, 504; see Häyhtiö & Rinne in this volume.)

Through the Internet actors may disseminate their aims and agenda horizontally, from peer to peer, by opening new public places within the complex structure of overlapping public spheres *micro-, meso- and macro-public* spheres, which form according to John Keane (2000, 77-78): "...a[*c*]*omplex mosaic of differently sized, overlapping and interconnected public spheres."* In addition, the employment of CMC offers multiple layers of spatial *asynchronous* contexts and opportunities to mobilise and advocate political pursuits. Publishing and sharing self-made media content horizontally through the Net is a process in which media outputs are received and conceived by their audiences in discursive and interactive manners. In this context any issue may take on political relevance. The meanings of these outputs are formed through communicative practises of sharing and delivering self-created material and information. Meaning-making is open-ended**;** even loose talk in which politics can materialise in the context of discursive interaction, when the new ways of framing and perceiving social/political issues, and new formulations of strategies are formed (cf. Dahlgren 2006, 279). The processes can be reciprocal, mutual attempts or launched even by a single active individual. It is possible to define issues as political, in other words politicise chosen topics, by denaturalising the conventional perceptions or through ironic and sardonic approaches. (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2009.)

Self-initiated and self-assertive production of de-medialised public arenas and communicating within its' boundaries means circulating unedited and unfiltered communication. It can be done practically by anyone who wants to intervene to publicly pursue whatever aims they wish. (Walch 1999, 67-71.) The power to start public discussions or debates is, at least partly, removed from the hands of the traditional mass media (Chadwick 2006, 137-138). It has proved to be impossible

to control civic discussion on the Net, communication just occurs on the Internet. Communicating and news making have also moved in a more interactive direction; they have evolved into truly bi-directional communication. Mass media keenly follows the on-line discussions and is picking up interesting topics from the Net for inclusion in the news. (Bennett 2003, 20; 2004, 141.) Being on the pulse of themes within micro-public spheres has become a vital part of media-reality and media criticism.

CIVIC EMPOWERMENT: IN BETWEEN ADMINISTRATIONAL E-DEMOCRACY AND ACTIONISM

Using the Internet seems to be a very promising tool in overcoming traditional apathetic political involvement, and empowering commitment to political issues. Both institutional and civil societal actors and even single individuals have noticed that the Internet and other CMC – related technical applications have inherently politically facilitating features.

The practices of new institutional-related public involvement have their roots in two different sources, which are New Public Management (NPM) reforms and forms of political participation theory. In a peculiar manner they have been converted into innovations of public involvement. During recent decades various modernisation reforms have been carried out at different levels and in different fields of public administration in OECD countries. In addition to many other functions public administration reforms have striven to connect citizens more effectively to the decision-making processes. Citizens are considered as subjects with needs and wishes that have to be met in order to produce good**,** efficient**,** governance. This is the reason why representative government is supplemented by a range of devices for public hearing and consultation to ensure the direct representation of citizen's views. (See Pollitt & Bouckaert 2004.)

The implementation of NPM strategies has led to the emergence of new practices and theories of political governance (Pierre 2000, 1-3; Hirst 2000, 18; Bingham et al. 2005, 549). One mode of political governance is public involvement culture, which aims to construct and

rationalise the practices of civic participation from above (see Häyhtiö & Keskinen 2005; Bingham et al. 2005; Bang 2003). The culture of public involvement is a model of new steering, inclusive political communication, which invites lay people to exercise civic influence in new access points and to partake in a systemic decision-making process (Bang 2003; see also Molinari and Lehtonen in this volume).

In addition to NPM reforms, the culture of public involvement has been influenced by the fact that the distance between political parties and citizens is widening. To answer this problem the ideas given by participatory democracy theory, deliberative democracy theory and most recently e-democracy have been set up because they stress the importance of citizen participation in public deliberation and decision-making (Bingham et al. 2005: Häyhtiö & Keskinen 2005; Dahlberg 2001). These models of participation aspire to political deliberation, in which people are motivated to deliberate in a civil and reasonable manner. Theories emphasise the distribution of information and knowledge as a material used by public in order to form arguments or to support their political opinions so that confidence among citizens increases. A democratic community is therefore to be founded on solidarity and intellectual deliberation and effective cooperation. The admission of legitimacy emerges from reasonable, logical and knowledgeable arguments that are approved by a majority (Häyhtiö & Keskinen 2005, 430)

The ongoing discussion of political alienation is an expression of concern about the unpopularity of political participation. The reigning political elite has recognised the need for the formation of new media for deliberation and forums of participation to bring about a more justified and legitimate form of governance. The aim and the promise of various local, regional, national, EU and global participatory projects and initiatives consist of closer bonds between public officials, politicians and citizens. The purpose is to create and introduce such procedures within the political governance system that strengthen the legitimacy and accountability of political decision-making. (Coleman & Gøtze 2001; Macintosh et al. 2002; Malina 2003; Tsagarousianou 1999; Schulman et al. 2003; Schlosberg et al. 2007.) Amongst these new channels to empower are digital networks, especially the Internet. They offer new methods of democratic participation (see Molinari;

Lehtonen; Paltemaa and Lappalainen in this volume). Most of the experimental public involvement e-projects utilise fairly similar infrastructures of CMC, notably various Internet applications. In general, the electronic democracy discourse is marked by two grand promises: the citizen's free access to public information and open discursive deliberation on the electronic Net (Tsagarousianou 1999).

The characteristic feature of the new *public involvement culture* is that it is giving voice to the citizens in such matters that fit into the context of representative political governance. The representative bodies, or civil servants, set the agenda. The citizens themselves do not set the agenda (see Macintosh et al. 2002; Malina 2003; Tsagarousianou 1999; Schulman et al. 2003; Schlosberg et al. 2007; Wiklund 2005; Albrecht 2006). Thus, active civil discussion is about matters, which are considered suitable (and usually they are rather harmless or insignificant) (Blaug 2002; Lappalainen in this volume; Häyhtiö & Keskinen 2005). Nevertheless, despite the fact that the topics of desired civil discussion are fixed, the very tendency to seek more legitimacy by allowing the citizens to participate in governance, tells of the transformation of the political culture. Those in power recognise the need to find out the attitudes and opinions of people at intermediate times between elections. (See Bang & Dyrberg 2003).

However, it must be acknowledged that several aspects of participatory, deliberative e-democracy theory materialise in many public involvement projects. People participate in the deliberations as equal citizens: the participants could be considered equal speakers and performers in relation to one another. Electronic deliberations – with the background information provided – could be considered as processes of political reasoning and argumentation, and the deliberations are free and public. Presentations are not generally hindered or restricted by any authority and they are all public, (cf. Dahlberg 2001a; 2001b), although, it has to be acknowledged that many discussion services are premoderated. Participation is voluntary and its aim is to influence politics. Nevertheless, people do not actually have a direct opportunity to contribute to policymaking. However, the explicit aim of the public involvement website forums is to promote democracy and the citizens' opportunities to participate in politics. The forums therefore seem to seek a kind of consensual politics by means of argumentative delibera-

tion. The aim of public deliberation is to legitimate future policies. In the forums, participation is reciprocal. This gives the participants an opportunity to justify their arguments and to assess the arguments delivered by others.

When comparing badly manifested civic empowerment of administrational e-democracy to actionist discourse of Internet politics, we may more profoundly understand the relation of the Internet to citizen initiated politics. For example, Internet research has concretely shown how new civic movements have adopted the logic of computer-mediated communication, which enables nearly unlimited freedom to produce citizen-oriented contents on the network. These digital contents highlight political struggles arising from citizens' own experiences, which can as well be local, national, or global. (Meikle 2002; McCaughey & Ayers 2003; Donk et al 2004; see also Lehtonen and Lappalainen in this volume). Variations in net-politics can manifest contents, methods of action and aims of whatever are the manifold civic actions, in which political stand-taking happens open-mindedly. Citizen initiated net-politicking is already considered as a basic style for the actors of civil society (cf. Calenda & Meijer and Lappalainen in this volume). Net-activity is incredibly capable of influencing the self-empowerment of various political groupings. In a society of interactive media, do-it-yourself civic activity is much easier than before.

In the present reflexive and global world individuals are in a position of constant judging. They are making choices and commitments, planning, and trying to tune in their preferences regarding the way they hope to conduct their own everyday lives. The identities of these individualised atomistic actors are constructed through complex sets of discursive interactions between the individual and the surrounding reality. In discursive interactions individuals may face risks, fears, threats, conflicts, injustices, uncertainties. (Beck 1995; see also Holzer & Sørensen 2001, 3-6; Bennett 2004, 126-127.) Reflexive politics emerges, when people are trying or wanting to take care of and handle responsibly the problems which occur in everyday life at the level of individual action (Micheletti 2003, 33). Thus public political activities become something more than mere mean, or instrumental action being pursued incrementally to achieve some ends. They are transformed into expressive performative activities, through which political actors

may represent involvement, engagement, social and political references, belonging, and personal value commitments. (Dahlgren 2005, 155; McDonald 2006, 33; Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007.)

CMC enables digital *micro*-politics that fosters the new ideas and modes of action along with the "snowball-effect" that can, during a timely course of action, permeate into *meso*-, or even *macro*-political publicness. The asynchronous temporal dimension is then fortified when people decide to join the original online campaign after noticing it from some other media. Hence, the Internet is to be considered as a *locus*, channel, and to some extent even a temporal space for political and communicative action, participation, and mobilisation. (Meikle 2002; Donk et al. 2004; della Porta & Mosca 2005; Garrett 2006; Häyhtiö & Rinne in this volume.) Various uses of the Internet facilitate different civic networks and organisations to introduce their aims and strategies, and to outreach target groups and members of the public. In addition, they may also more efficiently run the core tasks of campaigning projects, such as communicating with supporters, coordinating events in the field, organising crowds in fast-breaking situations, and reacting quickly to breaking news, and gain publicity for their issue (Mosca; Gillan and Baringhorst in this volume). The empowering potentiality of the Internet is so impressive, that hardly any serious political actor (or "wannabe" actor) could overlook its' facilitating features (Chadwick 2006). The technical development of the Internet and the plural forms of communication empower activity by opening a radically individualised environment, where personal concerns may be politicised.

REFLEXIVE CITIZENS AS GATEKEEPERS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Reflexivity expands the notion of politics to deal with self-initiated, individual, and subjective choices, which have an effect on the emergence of new types of political involvement, participation, and activities. Reflexivity means an active interaction between an individual and the surrounding world. It is taking responsibility for the subjective self-construction as an actor (see McDonald 2006, 14), and thus it is activity by the people instead of waiting for something to be done

by the government. A shift towards reflexive politics means a greater involvement and say in matters that are subjectively chosen to be important. The altering of the scope regarding political mobilisation, activity, and participation is contradicting traditional views of political activities. The transformation has controversial implications in respect of civic involvement and engagement; the changing of the paradigm towards a more individualised participation in which people are forming constantly changing representational multitudes through action (ibid., 34). Being part of or belonging to such multitudes offers an important insight into how people assess their self-identification, which is a primordial element of a complex structuring of identity and a self-defined understanding of "who am I?". The notion of reflexivity, as we understood it, resonates seamlessly with the personal identity formation and individualised political activity, in which the acting subject is intertwined in many personal passing projects that contribute to the subjective self-image of the agent. Civic involvement, defining a self as a stakeholder of public or common issue, is thus embedded in people's everyday lives (see Reimer 1999, 25-26), and that conducts the citizen's moral sentiments and actions. Hence, the very identity of an acting citizen is not stable; rather it is undergoing constant change according to the situation. The identity is a contingent, though reflexive fabric and an expression of advocated value commitments through different performances, mirroring the aspects of the individual's own life (ibid., 31).

The phenomenon of reflexive politics refers to an individualised politics that does not fit into the frameworks of old structural politics nor does it follow the logic or procedures of traditional political agenda setting. On the contrary, it seeks to respond to the limitations of collective political activity by turning the focus on the structural shift in the nature of participation (Micheletti 2003, 28). Subjective *do-it-yourself* politicisations generate different personal political homes for each actor, and politicised issues are motivated by personal interests and aims also reflecting modes of action. Politicised issues emerge from everyday life and the variety of them might cover the whole spectrum of human life that is related to the question of leading an ethical and fair life. Such issues consist of, for instance, human rights, political rights, political consumerism, animal rights, housing

and urban planning, sexual identities, environmental issues, health and so forth. (Beck 1995; della Porta & Diani 1999; Polleta & Jasper 2001, 285-6; Micheletti 2003; Dahlgren 2005, 154; Bernstein 2005, 54.) Real or alleged moral sentiments and ethical ethos are fuelling a force for taking action and motivation arises from personal agenda setting when political is understood as an answer to the question of "How should we live?"

The newly emerged political consumerism as a form of reflexive politics highlights the typical features of the transformation of the political. Political consumerism reflects a change in citizen initiated politics, in which people direct activity to fields that allow them to seek individual and spontaneous forms of political expression. (Micheletti 2003, 15, 24.) Evidently, the market sphere and consumption need to be conceived of as a tool and arena of politics, which citizens are willing to use in influencing politics. Political consumerism is often considered from a narrow point of departure that focuses on single shopping decisions. In a broader definition, political consumerism means civic activity that politicises market practices, corporate policies and market society. It displays numerous forms and manners of activity, such as performing global social justice criticism, human rights, sustainable development, animal rights, ecological lifestyles etc. (Micheletti et al. 2005, 258-259; Micheletti 2003, 15; see also Mosca in this volume). Also "one-target campaigns" highlight the politicisation of the market sphere and consumption, when a single corporation or market practice is attacked by intensive politicking (see Baringhorst; Häyhtiö & Rinne and Hintikka in this volume). Furthermore, it has to be noticed that political consumerism broadly includes different alternative modes of consumption, such as the open source movement, net piracy, the fair trade movement, dumpster diving, ethical banking and environmental labels etc.

A characteristic feature of the forms of reflexive political action is, due to its' meshworked nature, that it is not very consistently organised and they do not follow the traditional patterns of collective mobilisation. Mobilisation resembles more closely action networking than institutional structuring, and it employs publicity or may even produce publicness autonomously by using the tools and channels of new information technology (Chadwick 2006, 119; Wright 2004,

91; Bennett 2004, 127-130). Also, a successful activity is news itself. Typical of these actionist networks is that they flourish for a short but intensive time period capitalising on the publicity in provocative ways trying to raise new conflict settings that strengthen the impression of a truly affective political actor (see Baringhorst; Gillan; Jordan; Vromen; Häyhtiö & Rinne; Rättilä and Hintikka in this volume). In fact, most issue-specific individually orientated political interventions differ both from the traditional social movements, as well as from the "new social movements" in respect of their agenda, aims, temporal duration, and lines of chosen activities (Crossley 2002, 4; Osterweil 2004, 499, 504). Their ability to attract new followers and active participants is to be understood in terms of their capability to efficiently permeate different public spheres. By this capability they are able to offer people shared definitions in regard to the social grievances. To some extent this constructed relationship between individual and collective action is conceptually exactly what could be labelled as 'social' or 'socialisation', and which constructs the sense of belonging in actions when individual agents are reflecting and swarming around the emerging issues. (Polletta & Jasper 2001, 295; Bernstein 2005, 50; McDonald 2006, 22-3.) Thus, it is no wonder that the activities often take the form of countercultural intervention utilising its' styles and tactics (McDonald 2006, 35-6).

CITIZEN INITIATED INTERNET POLITICS EMERGING: OUTLINING THE THEMES

As a channel, the Internet is tolerant and produces repertoires of contention and challenging information. It connects a many voiced crowd to discuss certain issues bringing participants from various backgrounds together to share and contest their views. The multitude of people may unite into a meshworked collectivity or the opinions may polarise or diversify. Yet, as a political facilitator and meet-up place, the Internet has shown its' potentiality. The horizontal participation and action culture, characteristic of the Net, is far more radically democratic than traditional vertical democratic governing. Open and free Web communication based on the premise that all participants are equal

changes the nature of political communication and deliberation. The persuasiveness of arguments is dependent on the quality of argumentation, not on the position or status of the participant. The lack of personal face-to-face communication underlines the significance of appealing argumentation. This feature is important when we think of its outcomes in regard to political action. The transformative change is crystallised particularly in net-politics, because it is used to mobilise supporters and gather coalitions. Communicative reflexivity could be considered as a vitalisation of personal political empowerment, where collectivities and communities might be constituted just by clicking the mouse.

The volume is divided into two parts. The chapters in the first part discuss issues dealing with civic net-empowerment in relation to public bodies, political institutions, governments, and e-participation. The chapters in part I introduce innovative and creative forms of reactive politics responding to social and political wrongs. The chapters in part II, on the other hand, deal with different modes of net-activities introducing proactive civic empowerment in its various guises. The chapters in part II focus especially on citizen initiated styles of action emerging on the Internet.

Part I begins with **Lorenzo Mosca'**s chapter. He studies the Internet's contribution to political processes. In his analysis the Internet is viewed as a double-faced media that creates opportunities as well as poses new challenges for political actors, especially for civic associations. The focus in his chapter is twofold: it clarifies the role of Internet usage among the organisational activities, and analyses the leadership positions of different organisational sectors within the Italian Global Justice Movement. Mosca's chapter is built on both quantitative and qualitative research gathered from the participants in the demonstration on the Bolkenstein directive in Rome in 2005. Mosca provides an in-depth insight into relations among variables concerning the political use of the Internet and detailed information on the Internet use in the daily life of the organisations.

Kevin Gillan's chapter draws on qualitative data. The dataset comprises transcripts from over sixty interviews with anti-war activists carried out 2006-7, field notes from numerous observations of anti-war activity and documentary analysis of media sources and movement

produced literature. Even if ICTs have become nearly ubiquitous in campaign organisations, as Gillan's examples from the UK demonstrates, this by no means implies a homogeneous relationship between activists and technologies. When particular technologies employed by the activists are considered, we find highly uneven usage from group to group and individual to individual. Gillan argues that, in understanding the variable uptake of web applications, one key factor for consideration is the political perspectives of the actors involved. Particular uses, to which technologies are put is differentiated by a range of factors including campaign goals, organisational structures and strategies for change, and are analysed in Gillan's chapter.

In her chapter **Ariadne Vromen** explores the distinction between conventional and non-conventional forms of participation that challenges established relationships of contact between citizens and their parliamentary representatives. Her chapter is based on in-depth analysis on Australian internet-based organisation, GetUp.org. Vromen claims, in her chapter, that the Internet facilitates collective action by new communities of political actors, and also that existing interpretations of social movement action as distinct from interest group activities are questioned due to these new forms of well resourced, internet-based participation that disrupt established power relationships. Vromen's analysis includes interviews, site analysis, media analysis and survey data with participants, showing that GetUp has been successful in achieving its campaign outcomes and has managed to attract attention from non-internet media and institutionalised political actors**.**

Francesco Molinari provides in his chapter an insight into the implementation of ICTs in public institutions and its potential value to an increased (e-)participation in the political decision-making process. He critically explores the technological, social and institutional conditions enabling the current "best practices" of e-democracy to be turned into stable components of a participatory legislative process as well as citizen's involvement in the definition and evaluation of policy targets and initiatives. Three main paradoxes of collective action related to representativeness, accountability and scale are brought up as challenges that need to be further clarified, in order to ensure the execution of a quality legislative process, and the active engagement of individual citizens. Requirements for this do not only include the

establishment of mechanisms for the expression of a "separate judgement" by interested people with respect to their elected representatives, but also the settlement of conditions for a timely, informed and responsible judgement.

Pauliina Lehtonen's chapter on civic activism explores the use of the Internet and especially the expansion of social media usage linked to the changes within communication practices. Her chapter addresses the theme of *citizen-orientated* and produced online space at local grass-roots level. Analysis of the web portal of Manse Square, that was designed to provide a forum for different aspects of civic action by voluntary citizens, focus on the communal and political impacts of an example of local civic participation through the Internet. By analysing civic action and its potential impacts for social learning, Lehtonen provides an insight into civic action from two viewpoints: 1) collective civic action as social participation which might lack direct affiliation to political aims, and 2) collective action as political participation that has been initiated in the Manse Square environment more rarely than communally oriented forms of participation. The chapter leans on research material that consists of theme interviews (conducted in 2004), a web survey (in 2003–2004) and data gathered by participatory action research methods.

In his chapter **Lauri Paltemaa** analyses the so called "dictator's dilemma" between the need to import and apply new technology for economic development and upholding autocratic practises of an illiberal regime. Technologies related to the Internet are necessary for modern economic growth and development, but at the same time they serve as an information channel that is difficult to control by the authorities and therefore makes oppositional activities against authoritarian regimes more likely to occur and achieve success. Paltemaa discusses, in his chapter, how, under these contradictory predictions, one should assess the impact of the Internet on the political future of China. The crucial question, then, is what does the Chinese example tell us about the possible social and political roles of information technology? Is it but an "update of an authoritarian system to the digital age", or is it a means that forces the system to liberalise eventually?

Part I ends with a chapter by **Davide Calenda** and **Albert Meijer.** They provide a large scale cross-national empirical analysis of university

students' Internet activities and perceptions related to online politics. Their study contributes to the understanding of changes brought by Internet politics and gives empirical evidence of how extensive the political use of the Internet is. The descriptive analysis is framed within an interpretation schema that includes data on national differences and student's trust of the Internet as a means of empowering political citizenship. Their analysis confirms that using the Internet for politics has become a "normal" practice for the students and although it has not yet beaten the mass media, the use of the Internet for public activities is widespread. In addition, the study reveals that students make an integrated use of media to inform themselves about politics and demonstrates the similarities in political online activities as well as perceptions of politics amongst young people.=

Part II begins with **Pertti Lappalainen's** chapter. He claims that experience is a basic element of political action. His chapter is built on John Dewey's concept of experience introducing the idea of political style and also distinguishing various ways for political actors to stand out from other actors. In his chapter, Lappalainen develops the notion of the **"***politgenicity*" of action, and discusses public involvement, a style of political activity enabled by the Internet. Lappalainen treats public involvement as a "political behaviour" that is a distinct alternative to political action. On the other hand, in the chapter the Internet is perceived as a forum of opportunities for multiple political styles. Thus, it enables contingent action and new political activities as well as political behaviour which tries to commit citizens to the strategy of governing bodies.

Tim Jordan's chapter explores a number of related, activist forms of politics that could not have come about without the existence of a range of internet technologies. From these he draws general propositions for a tentative and complex view on the Internet and politics. Jordan outlines three figures of virtual politics, or 'hacktivism', which are**;** mass embodied online protest; internet infrastructure and information politics; and communicative practices and information control. Through these three figures of resistance, he provides an insight into the complexity of the situation whereby politics has collided with the Internet. When looking at the examples that Jordan offers in his chapter, the specificity of a politics that operates within social and

cultural norms that are dependent on Internet technologies, is that Internet politics is dependent on expertise and this expertise enables intervention into the infrastructure of the 'world'.

Sigrid Baringhorst describes in her chapter general characteristics of political consumerism looking at the politicisation of consumption as a new form of political participation. The Internet is discussed in her chapter in terms of an empowering tool for such activities by providing consumers efficient means for the collective production of knowledge that can be used to enhance the market power of consumers as well as their influence as civil society actors. The Internet allows many-to-many self-initiated communication and may strengthen network-based participatory politics. However, political consumerism is critically discussed in Baringhorst's chapter in terms of political legitimacy and accountability. Even though direct activism in horizontal networks has the advantage of a broader public participation, it may lack accountability towards a wider public. The high profile consumerist campaigns run the risk of being merely event politics, and the question of representation, which is a crucial question of liberal democracy, remains unsolved.

In their chapter **Tapio Häyhtiö** and **Jarmo Rinne** describe how the role of the Internet is becoming increasingly significant with regard to political participation and mobilisation. They claim that the Internet is a powerful tool in gathering coalitions and organising mobilisation. In their analysis they show, how the use of the Internet is transforming political styles, forms and organisational structuring of political activities and the temporal nature of such activities. Individually steered collective meshing creates an actionist network and brings the element of subjectivity into politics. On the Internet the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future may blur, because the Internet dislocates space from temporality allowing people to share the same virtual space without necessarily sharing a real-time co-presence. The co-presence might be temporally not-coincidental making the political action on the Net more fluid and contingent. Häyhtiö's and Rinne's analysis is based on the analysis of exceptionally intense Finnish net protest against gossip journalism right after the first Finnish victory in the Eurovision song contest in spring 2006.

Kari Hintikka's focus, in his chapter, is on the Nordic Internet piracy movement and its recent activism in Scandinavia. The activities of the piracy movement includes successful denial-of service-attacks against government and police www services in Sweden and the attempts to buy an island and to form a sovereign country for pirates. Hintikka examines how the *modus operandi* of some new social movements are changing from the traditional work-intensive to the network intensive model and how the Internet itself is becoming an identity megaplex where an individual can easily select and mix social and political offerings and act on their behalf. The Net piracy movement, Piratpartiet, is an example of a protest movement reacting proactively towards such issues as the copyright laws and digital privacy. According to Hintikka, the ongoing change from material and location-based production and distribution to the global and networked economy should not be considered merely hacktivism but as a signal of the deeper change both of a new repertoire and a political opportunity structure for new social and political movements.

In her chapter **Tiina Rättilä** studies the user-generated mode of political communication, namely the blogs. Rättilä argues that blogs are rich in communicative elements, both visually and rhetorically. Even the names of many blogs represent, or include a message through which bloggers try to "reveal the truth". By putting on a show bloggers are creating a performance as they simultaneously play with their narrated identities. Rättilä's analysis introduces *the performative perspective* on communication, is that in which the blogosphere is viewed as a public communicative process that is inclusive and open to all interested participants making the production of new political ideas and public initiatives possible. This approach allows different forms of expression accepting social and political diversity. As user-generated communication blogging is considered a horizontal social media-application that enables the DIY-approach in (political) communication. That leads us to a situation in which, quoting the author: "*Perhaps the best we can do is to say that democracy on the net is becoming increasingly creative, diverse, and messy*".

As a result of this volume the effects of the Internet on political civic empowerment can be analysed as follows. First, computer-mediated communication is a resource for the activity. The Internet has

modified movements and organisations. It has increased meshworking and made them more networked, fluid, and dispersed. Collective mobilisation and the opportunities for direct action are feasible for ordinary citizens. The Net also facilitates the construction and strengthening of collective identities and the dissemination of alternative information. Second, micro-public spheres of the Net are potential places for the usage of actionist power; the Net is an open space both for political judgements and opinions and for choosing political styles. On the Net, basically anybody can try to influence matters that are considered important. Third, the communication platforms on the Internet construct personalised connections, such as user identifications, bookmarks, link listings, archives, email lists, blogs etc., which may be latent connections of social networks for a long time, but in the unpredictable situations of Net politics they may become politically significant *nodes*. Fourth, the Internet as an experience-based space enables different learning processes through which individuals can improve their self-governance related for instance to technical skills, information retrieval and self-generated content and knowledge which are also crucial arts for practising spontaneous Net politics. Fifth, open publicness facilitates the making of comments and remarks by other Net users. In the Internet milieu the notion of public means that the message of a sender is in the public domain, that is, it is accessible to others, but still the message is not necessarily communal, i.e. it does not necessarily become a public issue.

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PART I

Democratic e-innovations and citizen-oriented empowerment through the Internet

LORENZO MOSCA

A double-faced medium? The challenges and opportunities of the Internet for social movements[1]

INTRODUCTION: THE DEMOCRATIC POTENTIAL OF THE INTERNET

This chapter draws on the recent debate on the democratic potential of the Internet. Such debate has often been dominated by the confrontation between sceptical and optimistic views, especially over the potential contribution of new technologies to improving political participation and democracy. The Internet has been considered by some to be a medium that favours those already interested and engaged in politics (Norris 2001). Other scholars claim that it can reduce political inequalities (Meyers 2001). Indeed, the Internet multiplies the channels for political information and participation at the individual level, provides new opportunities for communication, mobilisation and interaction at the organisational level, and creates new pluralistic public spheres where citizens can discuss issues of general interest directed towards to the public good at the macro level (della Porta & Mosca 2005a). The effects of the Internet have been discussed over many important fields, including its impact on participation and pluralism.

1. An earlier version of this essay has been presented in the ECPR joint sessions of workshops in Helsinki (May 7-12, 2007, workshop Democracy in movements. Conceptions and practices of democracy in contemporary social movements) and in the third Karlstad Seminar on Studying Political Action (October 18-20, 2007). The author wishes to thank the convenors, the discussants and all the participants for useful comments. A previous version of this chapter has been published as a working paper of the European University Institute (Series/Report no.: EUI MWP 2007/23) and translated by Jarmo Rinne in Politiikka 50:1, 51–68, 2008.

As for *participation*, unlike television and other high-cost types of communication, the Internet has been presented as a technology that allows broad participation and also reduces hierarchies, favouring horizontal forms of communication and organisation. More optimistic scholars such as Ayers (1999) stressed the capacity of the Internet to give more voice and power to the powerless. The "equalising" effect of the Internet has, however, been denied and challenged by more sceptical scholars such as Margolis and Resnick (2000) who have claimed that this new medium favours organisations already rich in resources and people already engaged in politics. Most recent literature on this topic seems to provide support for sceptic arguments.

As for *pluralism*, the Internet has certainly increased the quantity of information available and facilitated access to it. However, also on these issues, some skepticism has emerged on the quality of information available online (in particular in relation to the difficulties involved in assessing its reliability) as well as on the capacity of Internet communication to overcome social and/or ideological barriers (Sunstein 2001; Rucht 2005). Furthermore, the online presence of resource-poor organisations is overshadowed by what has been called "googlearchy", that is the tendency of search engines to over-represent mainstream political actors online (Hindman et al. 2003).

A discussion of the democratic potential of the Internet should also take into account the traditional critique concerning the democratic deficit of this medium: the digital divide. In fact, when reflecting on the Internet's democratic potential, it should be noted that even in rich and technologically developed countries a significant part of the population is still excluded from access to this medium. As Norris (2001) noticed, digital differences emerge in access between different territorial levels (not only between rich or poor macro-regions, but also between nations with similar standards of wealth located in the same macro-region), between different social classes in the same nation (penalising groups of citizens who lack economic and cultural resources), and between social sectors with different degrees of interest in politics (favouring groups of citizens already active and interested in politics). A large number of studies demonstrate that people without access to the Internet have peculiar socio-demographic characteristics. In fact Internet access reflects a gender divide, a generation divide,

an ethnic divide, a wealth divide and an education divide, as the Internet is more likely to be used by young, male, affluent white, and educated people.

Recent studies have focused on the use of new technologies by civil society organisations and individuals, with particular attention paid to the Internet. Electronic networks have been considered the backbone of new transnational social movements[2] which gained media visibility from "the battle of Seattle" on (Bennett 2003). Being bi-directional, interactive and cost-less, they allow for the construction of new public spheres where social movements can organise mobilisations, discuss and negotiate their claims, strengthen their identities, sensitise public opinion and directly express acts of dissent (della Porta & Mosca 2005a).

Internet research has been characterised by methodological pluralism (Garrett 2006), especially when focused on the organisational level. In fact, studies on the individual level have been undertaken mostly through online surveys that are generally based on self-selected samples, raising problems of reliability (Best & Krueger 2004). At the same time, the attention paid to offline surveys on Internet use has been limited to very basic questions concerning frequency and places of connection but generally ignoring the political dimension of Internet use.

As for the organisational level, the online presence of different political organisations has been investigated through the content analysis of websites (for NGOs see Vedres et al., Bruszt & Stark 2005; for parliaments and political parties see Trechsel et al. 2003; for social movement organisations see della Porta and Mosca 2005b); mailing-list analysis (Cristante 2003; Kavada 2006); search engine analysis (Zimmermann & Koopmans 2003) and with the case-study approach (Pickerill 2003). Such research has provided important insights into how these organisations use the Internet for acting politically by other means.

In what follows, I will address the political use of the Internet by the Italian Global Justice Movement (GJM) paying attention to both the organisations and the individuals involved in the movement. First of all, I will define the meaning of the concept "political use of

2. Social movements are defined as "informal networks, based on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilise about conflictual issues, through the frequent use of various forms of protest" (della Porta & Diani 1999, 16).

the Internet" and its operationalisation. Then, I will consider how the Internet is used politically by participants in social movements taking into account those factors that can explain different styles of Internet use. My hypothesis is that offline experiences (organisational and participatory ones) define the political profile of individuals that is then consistently expressed online.

In this chapter I will present data that was gathered with quantitative and qualitative instruments employed during different researches: a survey of participants in the demonstration on the Bolkestein directive (Rome, October 2005) and a series of interviews with those in leadership positions of different organisational sectors of the Italian GJM.[3] While quantitative data allows for the checking of some relations among variables concerning the political use of the Internet, qualitative data will provide more detailed information on Internet use in the everyday life of organisations.

Concerning the survey, as it is almost impossible to build a casual sample of participants in a protest event, I worked with a "non-probabilistic sample" (Corbetta 1999, 343-52).[4] The sampling strategy was based on previous surveys on participants in Italian social movement events like the Genoa G8 counter-summit and the Florence European Social Forum (Andretta et al. 2002; della Porta et al. 2006). The survey was implemented using a "strategy of small samples", focusing on the main organisational sectors of the Italian movement. A sampling method of selecting interviewees on the basis of their belonging to different organisational sectors was then employed (for more details see della Porta et al. 2006). Data was collected through a self-administered paper-based questionnaire distributed just before (when different groups assemble to organise their presence within the demonstration) and just after the demonstration (when people rested and listened to spokespersons of the movement) and during a conference on "common goods" discussing the consequences of the Bolkestein directive on public services preceding the demonstration. In order to take into

3. Both researches took place within the Demos project, focusing on conceptions and practices of democracy in the European Global Justice Movements (http://demos.eui.eu).

4. A probabilistic sample could not be built since for civil society events it is impossible to know exactly the characteristics of the population participating (indeed, lists of participants do not even exist).

account the different geographical provenances of participants, the questionnaire was also distributed on different trains coming to Rome (the place were the demonstration was held) both from the South (Sicily) and from the North (Lombardy) of Italy.

The non-probabilistic nature of the sample does not allow strong inferences to be made. Thus, I present only descriptive statistics and non-parametric correlations in order to give an idea of the strength of the relations between variables.[5] It is worth underlining that the findings provide information on the participants in a specific protest event but cannot be considered generalisations for the social movement population.

As for the qualitative part of this chapter, I interviewed those in leadership positions/ spokespersons of different groups belonging to different Italian social movement families[6] engaged in mobilisation on the issues of globalisation, democracy, and social justice: from political parties to unions, from large associations to small informal groupings. During the interviews I asked those in leadership positions of different Social Movement Organisations (SMOs) to indicate both the strengths and weaknesses of Internet communication.

While the first part of the chapter focuses on quantitative findings concerning the individual level, the second presents qualitative results regarding the organisational level (but still collected at the individual level). An attempt to compare systematically the Internet's limits and opportunities for social movements will be presented in the final section of this chapter.

5. All results of non-parametric correlations presented in this chapter have been previously checked with results obtained through cross-tabulations and other descriptive techniques. The significance levels of coefficients presented throughout the paper are reported as follows: ** means significance at the 0.01 level; * means significance at 0.05 level.
6. The concept of the social movement family has been proposed by della Porta and Rucht (1995) to indicate sets of movements of similar type (i.e. new social movements, left libertarian movements etc.) sharing a number of values and a similar political culture.

THE POLITICAL USE OF THE INTERNET BY PARTICIPANTS IN SOCIAL MOVEMENT PROTEST EVENTS

In this section the focus will be on the political use of the Internet by individuals taking part in social movement protest events. In what follows, I will present some results of a survey of the participants in a demonstration against the Bolkestein directive that was held in Rome on October 15th 2005.[7] Almost 500 questionnaires were gathered.[8] The questionnaire, focusing mainly on conceptions and practices of democracy within the GJM, also contained some batteries concerning sources of political information and Internet use.

First of all, it is worth considering that the sample includes people engaged in social movements which are characterised by an intense use of the Internet to organise and carry out political actions (della Porta & Mosca 2005a; for similar findings see also Van Laer 2006). The issues around which they mobilise are scarcely considered by the traditional mass media, and are under-represented in parliamentary arenas. Consequently, the Internet is heavily used: 42% of our respondents declared they used it daily, 30% more than once a week, 11% once a week and 8% once a month. Overall, less than one tenth of the interviewees never accessed the Internet.[9] This result is particularly significant if we consider that at the time of the survey the percentage of the Italian population accessing the Internet was estimated to be about 40% (Bentivegna 2006).

As figure 1 shows, the Internet is a medium that is entering activists' everyday life. In fact, considering the most important means of communication used daily to gather political information, we found that only newspapers were actually more used than the Internet (46% against 42%). This medium was more used on a daily basis by interviewees than other "mainstream" media of communication like the

7. The survey was directed by Donatella della Porta, and coordinated by Massimiliano Andretta and Lorenzo Mosca. I wish to thank Maria Fabbri, Anna Ferro, Egle Mocciaro, Linda Parenti and Gianni Piazza for their help in administering questionnaires.
8. We distributed 700 questionnaires and got back 500. Return rate was approximately 70%.
9. Among those who declared they did not access the Internet, 59% were women, 84% were undergraduates, 47% were more than 28 years old.

TV and the radio (around 35%). It is also worth noticing that interviewees use unmediated forms of communication as a primary source of political information: almost two thirds of interviewees declared in fact that they collected political information by talking politics with friends and colleagues daily. Even if they used different means of information, face-to-face relationships were considered much more important in the formation of their political opinions.

This data clearly shows that the Internet supplements other channels of information and serves to allow communication when face-to-face meetings are not possible but it is not substituting unmediated human communication (similar results can also be found in Di Maggio et al. 2001). In a movement that is considered heavily dependent on mediated forms of communication, we found that face-to-face interactions are still at the core of communicative processes. A similar result was found when analysing in depth the forms of communication employed during the first European Social Forum in Florence (Mosca & Teune 2007).

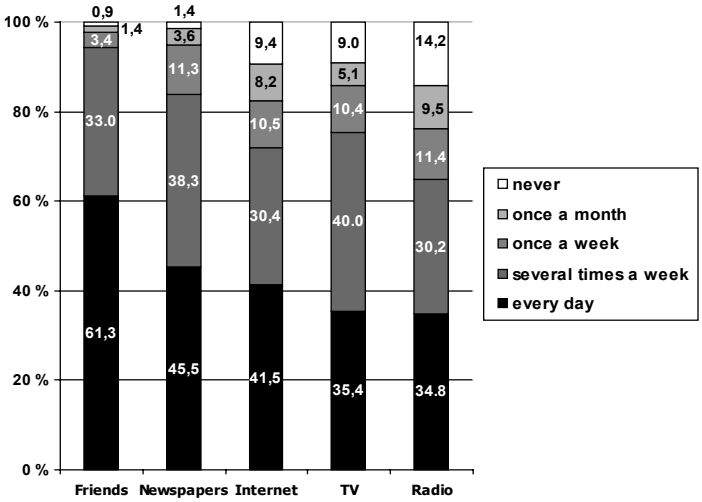

Figure 1. Frequency of use of different media to gather political information

However, the Internet is not just medium providing alternative information. It can also be seen as a resource that supports political participation in several ways: by providing a new platform for debate and engagement, or by complementing offline participation through, for instance, facilitating organisation and communication between people already involved in social and political networks (see also Introduction; Vromen; Gillan and Lehtonen in this volume).

The political use of the Internet has to be understood as using the Internet to gather political information, to discuss political issues and to perform acts of dissent. In order to assess if and how the Internet is used politically by participants in social movement protest events, interviewees were asked about how they use the Internet when online. The questionnaire contained indicators concerning different styles of Internet political use: to collect and produce political information; to exchange political opinions and to communicate with one's own group; and to perform online forms of action (e-petitions, net-strikes[10] etc.).

As can be seen in the Figure 2, 86% declared that they use the Internet to gather alternative political information. Around half of the sample had used the Internet not only to collect information but also to publish reports of protest events. This data is very interesting in that it underlines that interviewees are not just passive receivers of information but they also act as active producers posting online reports of protest events that they have directly experienced. One of the more innovative features of the Internet, that is enabling users to take an active role in publishing their opinions online, seems then to be fulfilled by a significant number of interviewees.

Data also shows that the Internet is not only used to (passively and actively) inform but also to engage in interactive communication, exchanging political opinions in forums/mailing lists/chats (56%) or to communicate with one's own political group (about two thirds of the sample). Results are quite different if we consider the last dimension of the political use of the Internet that is to practice online forms of action. While the Internet is broadly used to support online campaigns and petitions (almost three-quarters of interviewees do that), only one quarter of respondents participated in online radical forms of action

10. Net-striking consists of a large number of people connecting simultaneously to the same domain at a prearranged time, in order to "jam" a site considered a symbolic target, in order to make it impossible for other users to reach it (Jordan 2002).

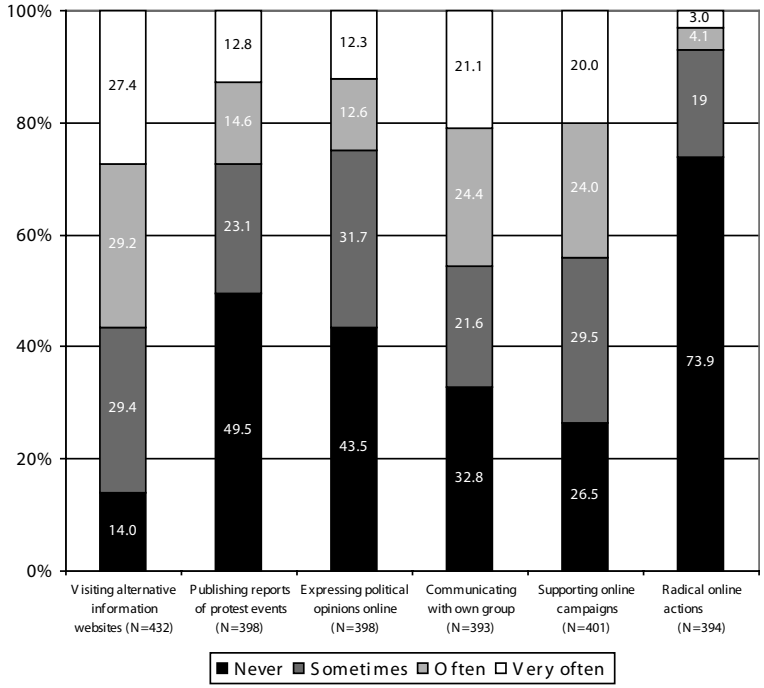

Figure 2. Political use of the Internet by social movement participants

(such as the net-strike). At this stage it is difficult to go behind the quantitative result explaining why "radical" online forms of action are scarcely practiced by participants in protest events. However, other studies (della Porta & Mosca 2005b) led us to hypothesise that this seems to be related to two different factors: firstly, the fact that information on the existence and the functioning of acts of electronic disturbance is not widespread among participants and, secondly, the fact that such online actions are perceived as ineffective and often disregarded by the targets to whom they are directed. More explanation of this will be provided in the second part of the chapter.

Summarising, the data shown demonstrates that the Internet is used politically at different rates: mostly for retrieving political information, campaigning and petitioning online, and to discuss in

ongoing assemblies with one's own political groups online. To a lesser extent, the Internet is used to actively produce information and to express political opinions online via forums, mailing-lists, blogs etc. Engaging in acts of electronic disturbance (i.e. net-strikes and mail-bombings) is instead still restricted to a reduced quota of participants in protest events.

In order to provide some tentative explanations of the political use of the Internet, I created synthetic indexes aggregating various indicators. This applies to the indexes of offline participatory experiences, offline organisational experiences, and political use of the Internet.[11] Even if correlation coefficients don't tell us anything about the direction of a relation between variables, I hypothesise that offline (organisational and participatory) experiences could explain the political use of the Internet to gather information, to talk politics online and to perform acts of dissent on the Net (figure 2).[12]

11. The indicators aggregated in the index of offline participatory experiences were dummy variables concerning the following forms of action: signing a petition/referendum, participating in a demonstration, participating in an alternative form of demonstration (May Day parade, critical mass, etc.), participating in an official strike, participating in a wild cat strike, participating in a sit-in, boycotting, occupying public buildings (i.e. schools, universities etc.), carrying out cultural performances, subvertising/adbusting. The indicators aggregated in the index of offline organisational experiences were dummy variables concerning the following organisations: political party, trade union, socialist/social-democratic organisation, communist organisation (3rd International), Trotskyist organisation (4th International), women's group, citizens' committee, environmental organisation, peace group, self-help group, voluntary organisation (charity), religious organisation, human rights organisation, gay/lesbian/transgender rights organisation, humanitarian/development assistance organisation, international solidarity organisation, social centre, migrants' association, organisation for the unemployed, student group and alternative media. The index of the political use of the Internet included the above mentioned indicators: look at the website of the European Social Forum; look at the websites that provide information on the global justice movement's protest events; visit a website of any source of 'alternative information'; express political opinions in forums/mailing lists/chats; exchange information online within your political group; post reports of action online (in mailing lists, forums, blogs, websites, etc.); sign online petitions or participate in campaigns through mailing lists; participate in a net-strike and/or in other forms of online radical protest.
12. Even if I do not want to disregard the impact of the Internet in shaping ways in which politics is perceived and experienced – especially by younger generations – it is clear that political socialisation, political culture and the values of the interviewees are the product of offline processes.

It is worth noticing that offline experiences, especially participatory ones, and the political use of the Internet are strongly correlated. The index of political use of the Internet is in fact associated both with organisational experiences (0.270**) and, especially, with participatory experiences (0.438**).

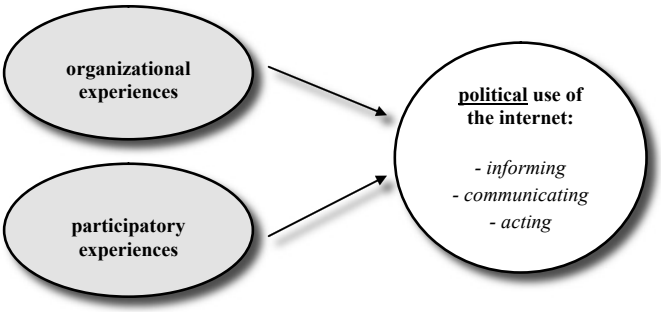

Figure 3. Relationship between offline experiences and political use of the Internet.

This result is interesting in that it seems to support those scholars (i.e. Norris 2001) who claim that online participation does not come out of the blue but is indeed related to offline participation. However, these data only refer to politically active citizens and do not tell us anything about the political use of the Internet of unengaged citizens. More research is needed on the latter because only by focusing on those citizens who are not active offline can we assess the real capacity of the Internet to involve previously unengaged citizens in politics.

Another interesting result that requires more discussion concerns the fact that the political use of the Internet is especially associated with what I called offline participatory experiences. As we have seen, organisational experiences per se are not strongly associated with the political use of the Internet while participatory experiences are strongly related to it. Data provides evidence that opportunities for online engagement offered by the Internet fit particularly well with people already used to engaging in different forms of action offline. In a nutshell, findings show that in a highly mobilised population

(like that of one of the participants in a protest event) participatory experiences matter more than organisational ones in explaining the political use of the Internet.

Still, it is interesting to open the black boxes of organisational and participatory experiences in order to assess which specific forms of organisational and participatory practices are more likely to be associated with the political use of the Internet. Are experiences in different social movement families related to different styles of using the Internet politically? More specifically, are experiences in new social movement organisations or charity groups more likely to be associated with the political use of the Internet than those in solidarity groups? Are there differences in the political use of the Internet between people with organisational experiences in new left and old left groups? Do people with diverse repertoires of action make a different political use of the Internet? Are innovative or moderate repertoires more likely to be related to the political use of the Internet than radical or traditional ones?

In order to provide an answer to these questions, organisational and participatory experiences have been split into different categories. In relation to organisational experiences (table 1), I created five categories recalling different movement families: old left organisations, new social movement organisations, charity groups, solidarity and rights organisations and new left organisations.[13] The hypothesis behind this classification of organisational experiences is that different movement families would adopt (and adapt to their needs) the Internet in different ways. Diverse social movement families have in fact different

13. Clusters of organisational experiences were built on the basis of the score of correlation coefficients concerning similar organisational experiences. The additive index "old left" includes the following organisational experiences: political party, trade union, socialist/social-democratic, communist (3rd International), and Trotskyist organisation (4th International). The additive index "new social movements" includes the following organisational experiences: women's group, citizens' committee, environmental organisation and peace group. The additive index "charity groups" includes the following organisational experiences: self-help group, voluntary organisation and religious organisation. The additive index "solidarity/rights groups" includes the following organisational experiences: human rights organisation, gay/lesbian/transgender rights organisation, humanitarian/development assistance organisation and international solidarity organisation. The additive index "new left" includes the following organisational experiences: social centre, migrants' association, organisation of the unemployed, student group and alternative media.

identities, organisational formulas, repertoires of action, and forms of communication etc. that affect their technological choices. Table 1 shows that experiences in charity groups are not significantly related to the political use of the Internet; experiences in old left organisations are weakly associated with using the Internet for internal communication; participation in the activities of new social movement organisations, compared with other organisational experiences, are particularly related to supporting online campaigns/petitions; and engagement in new left groups is especially associated with the informative dimension of the political use of the Internet. Interestingly, all organisational experiences (excluding those in charity groups) are associated with the active use of the Internet to produce political information (publishing online reports of protest events).

Table 1. Organisational experiences and political use of the Internet (Kendall's tau-b)

Political use of the Internet	ORGANISATIONAL EXPERIENCES				
	Old left	**Charity groups**	**Solidarity / rights groups**	**New social movements**	**New left**
ESF website	n.s.	n.s.	0.114*	0.228**	0.170**
Protest organisation websites	n.s.	n.s.	0.135*	0.176**	0.303**
Alternative information websites	n.s.	n.s.	0.174**	0.179**	0.297**
Publising protest reports online	0.178**	n.s.	0.175**	0.252**	0.279**
Expresing opinions in forums	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	0.214**
Communicating with own group	0.137*	n.s.	0.144*	0.176**	0.195**
Petition/ campaigns	n.s.	n.s.	0.139*	0.193**	0.173**
Radical online actions	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	0.152*	0.126*
Additive index	n.s.	n.s.	0.179**	0.266**	0.326**

Note: partial correlations controlled for the following variables: gender, age, education.

Considering the additive index of the political use of the Internet, we find a great variance among organisational experiences in different social movement families. Taking into account different organisational experiences, we notice that only certain types of experience are not associated with the political use of the Internet while others are more associated with it: experiences in new left organisations or new social movements are more likely to be related to the political use of the Internet. In Italy social centers have been in charge of the creation of media centers during important protest events (like the anti-G8 summit in 2001; see Andretta et al. 2002) and have been at the forefront of innovative (and conflictual) use of the Internet (see Freschi 2003). Many alternative media and many groups active on immigrants' rights have been born within social centers and developed later as something independent. Student groups also rely heavily on Internet communication, this sector of the population being among one of the most wired (cf. Calenda & Meijer in this volume). As for new social movements, even if technology has been seen with skepticism by environmentalists, most of them have eagerly adopted the Internet (Pickerill 2003, 36). Peace groups have particularly used Computer-Mediated Communication to organise important global days of action like the worldwide 15th February protest in 2003 (Walgrave & Rucht 2007). The Internet has also helped the international coordination of women's groups, playing a key role in the development of the World March of Women (Leonardi 2000), though it also caused challenges because of access problems in the Global South (Guay 2002).

As for participatory experiences (table 2), repertoires of action was divided into four groups: traditional, moderate, unconventional and radical.[14] Looking at the table below, we again notice that the

14. Clusters of participatory experiences were built on the basis of the score of correlation coefficients concerning similar participatory experiences. The additive index "traditional experiences" includes the following participation experiences: worked in a political party and took part in a strike. The additive index "moderate experiences" includes the following participation experiences: sign a petition/public letter and attend a demonstration. The additive index "unconventional experiences" includes the following participation experiences: participate in a sit-in, boycott products and attend an alternative form of demonstration (i.e. critical mass, May Day parade etc.). The additive index "radical experiences" includes the following participation experiences: take part in a wild cat strike, occupy public or private buildings and practice direct action against property/land.

association with the political use of the Internet varies a great deal depending on different forms of action.

Table 2. Participatory experiences and political use of the Internet

Political use of the Internet	PARTICIPATORY EXPERIENCES			
	Traditional	**Moderate**	**Uncon-ventional**	**Radical**
ESF website	n.s.	0.135*	0.333**	0.141*
Protest organisation websites	0.109*	n.s.	0.400**	0.272**
Alternative information websites	n.s.	n.s.	0.413**	0.219**
Publishing protest reports online	0.132*	0.186**	0.402**	0.252**
Expressing opinions in forums	n.s.	n.s.	0.326**	0.225**
Communicating with own group	0.185**	n.s.	0.365**	0.161**
Petition/campaigns	n.s.	0.269**	0.399**	0.137*
Radical online actions	n.s.	0.134*	0.331**	0.235**
Additive index	0.114**	0.192**	0.542**	0.297**

Note: partial correlations controlled for the following variables: gender, age, education.

While having practiced traditional and moderate forms of action is not strongly associated with the political use of the Internet, experiences of unconventional and radical forms of action are clearly associated with it. However, while unconventional forms are equally associated with different dimensions of the political use of the Internet, radical ones tend to be associated with Internet use directly oriented towards protest. First of all, the low association between traditional repertories of action and the political use of the Internet could be explained by the fact that the index was built to include forms of action related to traditional political actors like parties and unions, not amongst those more oriented toward a creative and inventive (political) use of the Internet. The interesting result is that more innovative forms of action such as participating in sits-in, boycotts and alternative types of demonstration are more associated with the political use of the Internet. Alternative types of demonstration such as critical mass and the May Day parade against precarious work rely heavily on the Internet and

this would help explain the results. Boycotts can also be considered an individualised form of action (Micheletti 2003) and this characteristic would fit very well with the political use of the Internet which is largely an asocial activity.

It is worth noticing that data seems to confirm that participants tend to reproduce their offline styles of action online (see also Calenda & Mosca 2007). In fact, those interviewees that adopt moderate repertoires of action are more likely to engage in moderate online forms of action like e-petitioning and e-campaigning while those more used to engage in radical forms of action offline are more likely to employ online radical forms of action such as acts of electronic disturbance.

THE TWO SIDES OF THE INTERNET: PROS AND CONS OF COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

After presenting quantitative data gathered on the individual level, this paragraph focuses on qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews. First of all, we notice that the perception of the impact of Internet use by social movement organisations varies according to the different targets of their action. The Internet can be used both for in-ward oriented communication and for out-ward oriented communication, both for addressing public opinion in general and specific and peculiar constituencies or groups of citizens, such as public decision-makers and politicians. However, our interviewees claimed that the Internet is more effective for strengthening specific types of communication.

In general it does not seem that the Internet favoured more interactions with public decision-makers as such actions made via the Internet were often ignored and seldom effective. It is clear that online mobilisation has more chance to influence decision-makers only when such issues have a certain visibility in the public discourse through traditional media. According to some interviewees, public decision-makers are generally neither competent nor interested in these online actions (interview 1). As a matter of fact, actions of electronic disturbance such as net-strikes and mail-bombings are not often recognised by their targets.

The Internet seems to be more effective in targeting other groupings. For example, it facilitates the movement's relationship with the media because press releases, photos, and documents are published on websites that are used by journalists as sources of information for their articles. The Internet is also conceived as an important means for cross-referencing different media. Thanks to this medium, some groups more specialised in information production can act as the live sound track of political events (like counter-summits and social forums) as they happen (interview 2). The Internet allows multi-media coverage of protest events through audio files, photos and video, textual reports and discussions etc. In addition, when covering an event some websites permit their users to upload documents online, thereby generating a considerable amount of information collected in different formats and by people with different points of view. In the Internet era, awareness of the fundamental importance of communication is widespread and people become active producers of information. These media-activists have gained a central role in the coverage of protest events of the global justice movement and in the creation of transnational public spaces like in the case of the Euromayday parade (see Doerr & Mattoni 2007).

Websites are employed to cover the current activities of the movement but also operate as archives and databases. Many interviewees refer to them as places of memory, where social movements can narrate their history, keep track of their past actions and store their documents and materials. This is for example clearly what happened with the ESF memory project using the Internet to recover and systematise information and knowledge produced within the European Social Forum process (http://www.euromovements.info/english/index.htm)

A clear understanding of the role of different Internet tools emerges from the interviews: different applications are used for different aims. If websites are used by SMOs as places to present themselves to the general public, other tools like forums and mailing-lists favour an ongoing communication and discussion among individuals. As a member of the eco-pacifist network Rete Lilliput stated:

> ..."[w]e have carried out our activity for more than one year without a website basing ourselves almost exclusively on the mailing lists …

> linkages between different knots and groups worked well but the lack of a website penalised us because … a public website is also visited by journalists and by the curious" (interview 4).

Most interviewees stressed the importance of mailing lists in the activity of their organisations. These applications, that are greatly appreciated and extensively used, are defined as "permanent assemblies". One activist of a local social forum in Venice underlined the contribution of the Internet in terms of transparency of the organisational process (for similar results see also Kavada 2006). Mailing lists are used to include people that could not attend physical meetings by disseminating assemblies' minutes (interview 3). The very nature and contribution of the Internet to grassroots political processes is however contested and discussed. While some groups declare an instrumental vision of the Internet, other ones underline that it is a political locus in itself. According to a member of the national executive of the Young Communists:

> ..."[T]he Internet is really a political space. It's not just an instrument. It's a place where, notwithstanding the great push towards privatisation and control, millions of people cooperate to build critiques and to attack the private idea that Microsoft and Windows propose of the Net. It is also a political space in that it represents a place of confrontation and discussion without precedent" (interview 5).

The symbolic/expressive function of the Internet is stressed by those groups declaring that the Internet helped in developing and strengthening their identities. This type of function is especially recognised by groups like local social forums which generally lack a physical place for their meetings. In these cases the Internet is referred to as a "virtual headquarters" or a "real virtual community" (interview 1). Being conceived as a political space in itself by some SMOs, it is not surprising to discover that, beyond the instrumental conception of the Internet, some SMOs raise a meta-reflection discussing the implications of new technologies and their relationship with power and politics. Melucci already stressed this characteristic of new social movements discussing the self-reflexive nature of the organisation. As he observed (1989, 74):

> ..."[i]n contemporary collective action, the organisation has acquired a different status. It is no longer considered a means to an end, and it therefore cannot be assessed only in terms of its instrumental rationality. The organisation has a self-reflexive character and its form expresses the meaning (or goals) of the action itself. It is also the laboratory in which actors test their capacity to challenge the dominant cultural codes".

The case of Rete Lilliput reflects very well what Melucci observed. This network focuses a significant part of its action on the issue of political consumerism; i.e. a peculiar form of citizen engagement in politics with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices through consumer choices based on attitudes and values concerning issues of justice, fairness or non-economic issues (Micheletti 2003; Baringhorst in this volume). According to political consumer strategy, consumers should conceive themselves as voters and corporations as candidates. Following this logic, shopping in a supermarket would correspond to voting in an election (Gesualdi 2003). Consumer-voters should use their shopping-bag power to (Ceccarini & Forno 2006) "punish" corporations-candidates producing goods without respect for the environment and workers' rights, while rewarding fair trade producers. Very interestingly, Lilliput is trying to move the idea of political consumerism from food and clothes to other areas of consumption, such as technologies. For this reason, the old website created with proprietary software was discarded and substituted with a new one hosted on a server working with free software (interview 4). The adaptation of the logic of political consumerism to new technologies was also made explicit by Lilliput in a document explaining that

> ...[d]eciding to use free software and to elude the Microsoft monopoly is no different to choosing to buy fair trade products, participating in boycott campaigns or depositing your money in an ethical bank: using free software means consuming critically also in the informatics domain" (Glo Internet 2003).

The discussion on technology within social movement networks is often associated with a reflection on internal democracy. Contemporary

social movements are making big efforts to democratise their organisational practices (della Porta et al. 2006) and the Internet is perceived as an opportunity for facilitating the spread and share of power within an organisation and to widen participation in its organisational life, improving internal democracy. The Internet can help to open an organisation to rank-and-file activists. One of the reasons explaining the success of this information and communication technology among social movements is its prefigurative nature (Downing 2001). In fact, it fits very well with the nature of post-ideological groups concretely practicing daily the values and principles of another possible world (i.e. radical democracy) and not postponing them to the future.

However, the adoption of new technologies can also produce inequalities of power. Websites requiring technical knowledge select those with the knowledge to tackle them. Experience has also shown that centralised management of information slows down the process of dissemination (interview 8). In such cases the webmaster can make arbitrary choices and can become a de facto gatekeeper. This is the reason why many groups created new websites to limit or get rid of webmasters increasing and favoring the participation of non-experts (interviews 4, 7 and 8).

An open publishing system is employed on some websites in order to widen participation of their users. Principles such as non-hierarchy, public participation, minimal editorial control, and transparency tend to inform the websites employing open publishing, though they do so to varying degrees (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_publishing). Although their adoption and implementation can be problematic, open publishing and open management systems are considered antibodies to the monopoly of power in the hands of a few technologically skilled individuals. One of the first websites close to social movements adopting open publishing was the Indymedia network. Nevertheless, even Indymedia does not completely apply the logic of open publishing (Atton 2003). The Italian knot of Indymedia combines open publishing and the method of consensus. However a shared definition of the latter doesn't exist; it should be understood as a decision-making method stressing the importance of the decision-making process in itself, avoiding decisions made by vote and trying to build a wider consensus on decisions through an ongoing discussion. In the case

of Indymedia-Italy, until its recent cessation, the right column of the homepage was open to contributions by all, but messages with explicit fascist, racist and sexist contents could be removed. Decisions on the information to be inserted in the central column of the homepage were taken through discussion in an open and public mailing list adopting the method of consensus. All the decision-making processes had to pass through the national mailing list (Italy-list) in order to give anyone the possibility contributing to a specific decision (interview 6). The adoption of the consensual method is however problematic. In fact, it was one of the causes of the recent end to the Italian Indymedia network. Reasons explaining the (temporary) collapse of the network were in fact the decline in participation, the bureaucratisation of the project and the consensual decision-making method, thought to work only poorly in the mailing lists (Alice 2006).

As many SMOs are aware of the risks deriving from Internet communication, some of them try to intervene directly on this issue, spreading technological skills within their organisation. As argued elsewhere (della Porta & Mosca 2005a), SMOs can play an important role in socialising their members to Internet use. Being places where a great importance to new technologies is given, practices of media-activism and hacking developed within social centres. Most of them host what are know as "hacklabs" (hackers' laboratories), that is laboratories with a clear ideological leftist orientation socialising people to informatics knowledge, free software, freedom of expression, privacy, digital rights and self-management.

Some of the groups I interviewed created groups of people specifically to deal with Internet issues and to try to diffuse knowledge on Internet use among their participants (interviews 4 and 9). These groups are expected to inform and educate in using Internet communication in a proper manner as it takes time to learn to use email, file sharing and downloading, search engines etc. They also raise awareness on the alternatives to Microsoft's proprietary software.

Another issue worth discussing concerns the characteristic distinguishing the Internet from previous media of communication: interactivity. In some cases it can be seen that interactive tools are not used by SMOs because they feel that they would require a great effort. This concerns especially more traditional organisations such as trade

unions which some scholars have called "dinosaurs in cyberspace" (Ward & Lusoli 2003). Most of them fear losing control of interactive spaces on their websites. As they don't have enough resources to devote one member of their staff to moderate interactive spaces, they just prefer to avoid them (interview 10). However, if on the one hand the presence of staff monitoring such spaces is important if one wants them to impact on organisational decisions and processes, on the other hand the presence of moderators can hinder free expression, and even censor inconvenient claims. In those cases while an explicit and clear netiquette (online code of conduct) can favour a polite and constructive discussion, the presence of moderators could have negative effects on the dialogic process (i.e. structuring it around pre-defined issues) and thus should be kept to a minimum. With some exceptions, the tendency of "old" organisations such as trade unions has been to use the Internet as previous media of communication, not fulfilling its most innovative aspects (such as interactivity; for this see Rättilä in this volume) and using it for top-down forms of communication. Findings like this have been highlighted by different studies concerning the websites of political parties (Margolis et al. 1999; Gibson et al. 2003) and institutions (Coleman et al. 1999; Trechsel et al. 2003). This evidence raises the question of whether old organisations jumping online are reproducing on the Internet their vertical styles of communication. A generation gap within and between "old" and traditional organisations/members and "new" and innovative groups/activists in conceiving and understanding the Internet is referred to by some interviewees (interviews 1 and 11).

While the generation gap hypothesis needs to be deepened and tested with further research, we can see that many interviewees (i.e. interviews 13, 14, 15 and 17) tend to underline the importance of face-to-face relationships, irreplaceable by online communication. Many interviewees point to the fact that face-to-face interactions allow the construction of relationships of mutual trust, something that cannot be generated online (Diani 2001; Kavada 2006). That is, Computer-Mediated Communication is perceived as being something that can effectively complement face-to-face interactions but cannot substitute them. As a spokesperson of the World March of Women claimed:

> ..."[I]nternet contacts are important but we are aware that we cannot build a movement only with them: we need physical contacts with people in order to build personal and political relations otherwise it is impossible to grant continuity to our action" (interview 12).

Another important issue that is stressed by most of the interviewees is the difficulty related to the employment of the Internet as a decision-making tool. It has been suggested that the suitability of the Internet for making decisions could be application dependent: "applications facilitating real-time communication, such as chat, are better suited to decision-making, as they allow for complex negotiations to take place more quickly and efficiently than email and email lists" (Kavada 2006, 11-12). Still, many interviewees rejected the idea of using the Internet for making decisions. Others underlined that moving decision-making processes online can create new inequalities because access limitations, familiarity with written culture[15] and technical expertise give power to a limited number of people. Thus, technology can become a new source of power asymmetry. Fear of excluding some activists led in some cases to limiting the use of new technology while giving value to face-to-face communication. (interview 19).

Together with the limits of the Internet for making decisions, our interviewees point at the risk of overvaluing the Internet's effectiveness in mobilising offline protestors. Some criticised the attitude of other SMOs and activists to "virtualising" the conflict and relying too much on the Internet as an instrument for bringing people out onto the streets (interview 16). According to the spokesperson of a local social forum: "we also need to be militant, to draw posters and write leaflets and to have physical contact with the people otherwise we won't change the world! …our struggle needs a visible and physical presence" (interview 1). Among structural limitations of Computer-Mediated Communication, our activists are also aware of the issue of the digital divide. As we have seen, Internet access is still very much restricted to well-educated people with high incomes, while women and older

15. Being mostly text-based, the Internet (at least in its 1.0 version; for the distinction between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0, see the Introduction in this volume) fits better with people with a background in written culture. Those more skilled in writing and used to dealing with the written word would then be more capable of profiting from such technology especially in interactive and dialogical spaces on-line.

people generally have lower rates of access. In the Italian case, according to different surveys and estimates, only a percentage of the population below 50% currently accesses the Internet. The majority of Italian people are still excluded by this media. As some interviewees noticed "a lot of people still don't even know what the Internet is" (interview 13) and "if you want to reach people in the street or in your district, you have to adopt different tactics" (interview 18).

SOME CONCLUSIONS: CONTRASTING THE TWO SIDES OF THE INTERNET

As the quantitative analysis showed, the Internet is used politically by many participants in protest events who employ it to gather alternative information, discuss politics online and perform different types of action online. Secondly, we also found that the Internet is more likely to be used by those individuals with previous radical and unconventional participatory experience while organisational experience is less important in this respect.

Thirdly, interviewees tend to reproduce their offline styles of action online. The qualitative interviews have shown that the Internet represents a "double-faced" medium for social movements in that it provides new opportunities for practicing politics but it also implies a series of risks and challenges. On one side it is horizontal, bi-directional, interactive, and cheap, and it empowers resource-poor collective actors and individuals. On the other side, the problem of the digital divide raises a discussion on the democratic nature of this medium.

While most of the literature focusing on the Internet and politics tends to assess the positive contribution of Computer-Mediated Communication to political processes, this chapter has stressed both positive and negative consequences of the Internet for social movements. Some scholars (Garrett 2006; Pickerill 2003) have underlined the need to consider also the undesirable effects of the Internet: what types of constraint does it pose to collective action?

The tables below are an attempt to present a systematic comparison on different dimensions of the limits and opportunities of Internet

communication for social movements. First of all, the Internet is used to address different targets in more or less effective ways (table 3). Some groups organised online campaigns to exert pressure on public decision-makers. However, in many cases politicians disregarded these. According to interviewees, this concerns especially the older generation of politicians who - because of cultural and/or generation characteristics – have not incorporated the Internet into everyday life: most politicians experienced a belated socialisation to the Internet and they are forced to use it without a complete understanding of the potential of this medium (i.e. interactivity) using it as they would a previous media of communication. As a consequence, online actions such as net-strikes and mail-bombings are not recognised and understood as genuine forms of action.

However, we could also provide a different explanation for such phenomena. First of all, public decision-makers refer to the "power of numbers" (DeNardo 1985) in order to evaluate these online protests. They question how many "flesh and bones" people are really present behind online actions action. Electronic disturbance could in fact be the result of a coordinated action of a very small group of like-minded people supported by technologies. Second, public decision-makers are mainly interested in what their voters think about a specific issue but they are not very concerned by claims raised by people that are not part of their own constituency. As the Internet makes communication easier beyond geographical borders, people supporting campaigns online are often geographically dispersed and belong to different electoral districts. The border-less nature of the Internet explains the limited impact of online campaigns on public decision-makers.

Table 3. Limits and opportunities of Internet communication to address different targets

Targets	**PROs**	**CONs**
Public Decision-Makers	Possibility to organise direct pressure campaigns on deputies / representatives	Border-less nature of the Internet
Journalists	Description bias could be limited	Selection bias is not overcome
Public Opinion	Disintermediation	Digital divide and "googlearchy"

The Internet is considered by interviewees more effective in addressing journalists and in attracting (mass) media coverage. The "description bias" of traditional media - relying mostly on press agencies to give an account of political events - could be partly overcome. Thanks to the Internet there has been a great increase in sources of information and journalists now have direct access to SMOs' websites where press releases, mission statements, documents, leaflets, photos, video, f.a.q., etc. are stored. When covered, movements now have more chance that their point of view will be taken into account but in the end journalists are always those who build up the news, manipulating and modifying the movement's original claims. Besides, movements cannot overcome the "selection bias" of the press. Journalists are still the gatekeepers of offline information and they tend to give greater visibility to institutional actors and processes (Gitlin 1980; Ryan 1991).

Some scholars (Bennett 2003) have pointed to the capacity of the Internet to produce a short circuit with traditional media, with information flowing from the cyberspace to the television, reaching public opinion. In any case, the Internet allows for a disintermediation of social and political actors from traditional media. However, the possibility of social movements using the Internet to address the general public is severely limited by the digital divide, i.e. lack of access to Internet communication, especially for older and less educated people. The Internet raises the risk of selectivity and exclusion for people without access to it. Besides, the great majority of Internet users tend to use search engines to orient themselves in cyberspace (Koopmans & Zimmermann 2007). As some studies proved, website visibility is strongly determined by "googlearchy", i.e. the tendency of search engines to give greater visibility to the main actors in the political game. This means that general users, ignorant of the existence of social movements, are less likely to be directed to their websites when using search engines.

As we have seen, interviewees also underlined how different tools serve different functions: websites are mainly used for external communication, while mailing lists and forums are employed for internal organisational communication and are conceived by activists as ongoing assemblies where discussion goes on and on. SMOs use the Internet to address their activists, engaging them in their organisational life

and establishing an ongoing relationship with them (table 4).[16] Still, it risks being a "redundant" and "self-referential" medium in that it seems capable of reaching, on the whole, already active and informed people. In addition, efforts to strengthen internal democracy through the adoption of new technologies can be frustrated by the presence of a few technologically skilled individuals who manage and control them. That is, technology can become a new cause of power inequality, creating new hierarchies. In fact, people with technical skills can exert great power within an organisation heavily reliant on Internet communication. This problem has been partially faced by SMOs developing technological tools that can be easily used by non-experts, designing more participatory websites and also creating specific groups devoted to members' socialisation to new technologies. Some SMOs' websites, inspired by the principle of distributed management system, are not managed by a single webmaster but by a group of people. Hence, the continuous search for democratising the organisation offline is mirrored online. This seems to confirm that Internet use is shaped in accordance with offline identity (Calenda & Mosca 2007).

Table 4. Strengths and weaknesses of Internet communication for social movements

How the Internet affects…	**PROs**	**CONs**
…internal democracy	Activists' involvement in the everyday organisational life	Power inequalities related to expertise and technological skills
…reflection on power	Using free software to save money and to practice political consumerism	Lack of expertise hinders a massive adoption of free software
…social relations	Multiplies frequency of communication	Its capacity to create dense networks (and mobilise) is sometimes overvalued

16. Most social movements consider the interactive features of Web 2.0 applications extremely important for implementing their democratic ideals. However, when the interviews were carried out many organisations declared they had not yet employed this kind of application.

Social movements are self-reflexive actors very concerned with democracy and linking it to the politics behind technology. Hence, technological choices become a new way of practicing political consumerism. Not only does free software allow organisations to save important material resources, but its philosophy also challenges the monopolies of transnational brands and corporations (like Microsoft). Notwithstanding, political consumerism of technologies seems to be restricted to a limited number of people since lack of expertise and information hinders a massive adoption of free software by activists. Moreover, the absence of a critical mass of free software users limits the incentives to employ this kind of software.

Last but not least, the Internet is used by social movement organisations and activists as a complement to (and not as a substitute for) face-to-face social interactions. Among interviewees nobody thought that the Internet could replace face-to-face communication but it is much appreciated because it multiplies possibility and frequency of communication among dispersed individuals. Besides, sometimes the capacity of the Internet to inform and mobilise people in the streets is overestimated.

As qualitative interviews have shown, the importance of this new medium of communication is very well recognised but activists also stressed its limits and claimed that it is a necessary but not sufficient condition for political action: face-to-face interactions are the core of political action. That is, the political use of the Internet is just a continuation of offline politics by other means.

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INTERVIEWS

1 – spokesperson of the Abruzzo Social Forum.
2 – president of the weekly magazine, *Carta* (paper).
3 – activist of the Venice Social Forum.
4 – activist of the working group on the Internet from the Rete Lilliput.
5 – spokesperson of the Young Communists.
6 – activist of Indymedia-Italy.

7 – creator of the online magazine, *Social Press*.
8 – president of the Italian World Shops Association.
9 – activist of the social centre, Bulk.
10 – webmaster of the trade union for metalworkers, Fiom (Federazione Impiegati e Operai Metallurgici).
11 – editor of the communist newspaper, *Il Manifesto*.
12 – spokesperson of the Italian branch of the World March of Women.
13 – activist of the non-violent group, Casa Pace (House of Peace).
14 – president of the pacifist online portal, PeaceLink.
15 – spokesperson of the Rete Lilliput.
16 – delegate of the rank-and-file union Sin COBAS.
17 – collaborator of the online magazine, *Social Press*.
18 – activist of the Italian branch of the World March of Women.
19 – spokesperson of the COBAS Confederation

KEVIN GILLAN

Diverging attitudes to technology and innovation in Anti-War movement organisations

INTRODUCTION

From October 2006 a year-long campaign of daily direct action was waged against a UK navel base that serves the UK's Trident nuclear weapons system. During the first week of protests I visited a small flat in the nearby town of Helensburgh, in which two members of the campaign's steering group lived:

> This had become the central hub of activities for the first week of the campaign and was strewn with the paraphernalia of modern activism: in addition to banners and posters around the place, three laptops were on and networked, several mobile phones were charging as well as the landline and a dedicated campaign phone line. (Field notes, Helensburgh, October 2006.)[1]

The fact that this had become a well-equipped office would feel quite unsurprising to visiting blockaders, as simply part of the bustle and buzz of a new campaign. During the same trip I visited the Faslane Peace Camp, a ramshackle collection of brightly painted caravans, mobile homes and improvised sheds that has been inhabited by vary-

1. This chapter draws on qualitative data from an ESRC-funded research project (RES-228-25-0060) with Jenny Pickerill and Frank Webster. The dataset comprises transcripts from over sixty interviews with anti-war activists carried out 2006-7, field notes from numerous observations of anti-war activity and documentary analysis of media sources and movement produced literature. Further information on the project is available at www.antiwarresearch.info.

ing groups of protesters for twenty-five years. A seasoned anti-nuclear campaigner, and new resident of the camp, described their plans to set up a computer lab with donated equipment and noted that the following day they would be having a broadband internet connection installed. The only real surprise here is that they'd managed to convince a telecommunications company that bills would be paid regularly. For contemporary activists, high-tech comes as standard.

While recognising the familiarity of such developments, however, we should not lose sight of the rapidity and scale of change represented by the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) into social movement activism. For instance, given that the text message has only been a possibility since the mid-1990s, and the mobile phone call has been affordable for just a little longer, it is remarkable that, as one very experienced interviewee claimed: '*you couldn't not have them, you'd be stuffed without mobile phones*' (Lindsay German, Convenor, Stop the War Coalition). Another respondents wondered, '*its hard to think how it worked before (the internet)*' ('Fiona', Trident Ploughshares activist). Anti-war groups in the UK, typically working on a shoestring budget, have mobilised significant resources in order to operate within technologically advanced information networks (Gillan, Pickerill & Webster 2008). But that bare fact masks a multitude of individual decisions concerning the benefits of campaign websites, email lists, discussion forums, mobile communications and so on. This chapter examines the attitudes that commonly influence those decisions and their implications for activist groups who adopt new ICTs.

Even if ICTs have become nearly ubiquitous in campaign organisations, at least in the UK, this by no means implies a homogeneous relationship between activists and technologies. Rather, the particular uses to which technologies are put is differentiated by a range of factors including campaign goals, organisational structures and strategies for change. Additionally, as I will argue below, the attitudes that people bring with them to the engagement with technology – what Kirkpatrick (2004) calls 'computational temperaments' – delimit the potential that may result from activists' adoption of ICTs. We will see that UK anti-war groups have mainly displayed a user-oriented approach to technology, making use of the manifest functionality of

new communication tools, more or less as intended by their inventors. Occasionally, however, a more innovative approach to communication technologies is evident. This approach, which has some features in common with computer hacking, is characterised by an irreverent attitude to the rules embodied in ICT devices, as individuals stretch and blend the functions of different devices and discover new ways to mobilise participants, reach audiences and coordinate protest. By examining instances where these two approaches have come to the fore we will be able to discern more clearly how some kinds of technological innovation can benefit particular forms of activist organisation. I will argue that it is particularly where the pursuit of collective action requires horizontal communication structures that the hacker attitude may offer significant benefits. Alternatively, where the horizontal structure of communication is less relevant to the execution of movement tasks, the user attitude offers an efficient articulation with technology.

HACKERS AND USERS: ATTITUDES TO TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

The key role of 'hackers' in the development of technology has long been acknowledged in sociological studies of computing. Turkle's (1984) investigation of programmers working with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's mainframe machines was particularly instructive in teasing apart the influences of social institutions, personality traits and subculture on the innovation occurring in that particular location. Others have identified hackers more widely, suggesting a range of common characteristics such as a shared 'work ethic' appropriate to the information age (Himanen et al. 2001), or a political world-view centred on the value of total and free access to information (Nissenbaum 2004). But depictions of the social or ideational milieu of hackers are inevitably contingent on specific technical subcultures or epistemic networks. What is stable across these accounts, and what I will describe as the minimal specification of the hacker attitude, is a distinctive relationship between people and technology.

The hackers' approach to technology has usually been described through examining what hackers value about their innovations. Jordan and Taylor usefully summarise the 'good hack' as being masterful, simple and illicit (2004, 7). These terms require some unpacking. First, mastery is displayed by a high level of understanding of a complex system, which is a requirement for the hacker to be able to meaningfully modify it: '*Hackers are people who have acquired the expertise required to take control of a personal computer and make it do things that are not part of the publicised functionality of specific, pre-packaged software*' (Kirkpatrick 2004, 118). Second, simplicity is displayed through a parsimonious approach to system resources. Due to hardware limitations, of both mainframes and personal computers (PCs), this was certainly a requirement of the early hackers' work. While some such limitations have been overcome there remains a tendency to admire those hacks that make the most efficient use of the least inputs. Thirdly, what Jordan and Taylor refer to as the 'illicit' nature of the 'good hack' may be more broadly described as boundary-crossing or rule-breaking. For Kirkpatrick:

> 'the thrill of the hack lies in this getting a machine to do something its designers did not intend' and the hacker is consequently 'someone who is disrespectful of the rules that are codified into the machine interface … (who) reaches straight through the lie, into the code and protocols that make it possible' (Kirkpatrick 2004, 117–118).

Similarly, for Turkle, '*the hacker is a person outside of the system who is never excluded by its rules*' (Turkle 1984, 227). When transposed to the overtly political contexts that Jordan and Taylor examine, this characteristic may well imply illicit uses of informational technologies. But the rule-breaking described by other authors tends to refer to the rules of the technological systems themselves and such behaviour need not cross the line into uses of technology that are in some way forbidden or unlawful. At minimum, then, the hacker attitude to technology displays a desire to learn about a technology, and to use the knowledge gained to cross the boundary from prescribed uses to find unintended and efficient new applications.

The user is typically defined in opposition to the hacker. Turkle was again instrumental here, pointing out that:

> 'A user is involved with the machine in a hands-on way, but is not interested in the technology except as it enables an application. Hackers are the antithesis of users' (1997, 32).

Users wish to apply the publicised benefits of technologies but show little interest in reaching beyond the surface. Kirkpatrick uses the 'cynically compliant game player' as a prime example of the user attitude. The user is:

> 'the reference point for interface designers' and 'does not think about how the machine works when she is using it. She takes for granted that it is able to tell what she wants on the basis of her clicking neatly representative icons' (2004, 117).

The game player is described as cynical because Kirkpatrick claims that it is impossible that they have failed to see through the interface and realise that their own actions are programmed by the software, but they nevertheless continue to play along, performing a set of prescribed mechanical motions. This ideal typical representation of the user is important because computer games were used to pioneer the development of graphical user interfaces that increase the distance between the user and the underlying codes and protocols required for genuine mastery over the machine. The resulting 'user friendly' interfaces make certain prescribed tasks easier to accomplish, but at the expense of disempowering the user from utilising the technology for a wider range of functions that may not have been conceived of by the original designers.

The dominance of, first, the Apple Macintosh, and then computers running Microsoft Windows, was based on the continual extension of the 'user friendly' operating system and so implies the prevalence of the user attitude among PC buyers. There are three important developments in ICTs that may push people's engagement with technology towards the user attitude. First, as ICTs have become embedded deeply into ever more sectors of lived experience the demographics

of technology use have changed. In reference to the Internet, Nissenbaum claims:

> 'Technologies of information quickly passed from early obscurity and mythological idealism into the mainstream of everyday experience and the early demographics of cyberspace ... expanded' (2004, 201).

Early adopters of technologies are more likely to have been interested in technology *per se*, and therefore been more likely to experiment and push the limits of the technologies available. As it becomes progressively easier to achieve complex tasks, however, more people are drawn to technological solutions simply for their immediate, advertised benefits. The demographic shift in ICT use should temper our expectations about the degree of innovative, boundary-crossing solutions discovered within non-technical communities. Second, the user attitude is encouraged by technology manufacturers who try to delimit the possible relationships between user and machine. As Woolgar's (1991) examination of usability trials for a new PC in the mid-1980s illustrates, the development of the interface and its supporting manuals is a route through which manufacturers 'configure the user' on the basis of assumptions of what users understood about the machines and what software developments the user ought to value. Moreover, the 'user friendly' approach to software design is equally 'hacker unfriendly'. The dominant graphical user interfaces are distributed as precompiled binary code, readable only by machine. This is done in order to protect intellectual property and because of designers' assumptions about users' needs. It is primarily among the open source software movement that delving behind the interface is really encouraged and consequently the distribution of the human-readable source code is a central tenet. Unsurprisingly, it is within that community that contemporary studies of hackers typically find the creative engagements with technology that they seek (Himanen et al. 2001; also Lessig 2002). Third, the variety of ICT devices available to consumers in developed economies has increased rapidly, and many of these are built in ways that are even less conducive to hacking than the modern PC. For instance, it is generally harder to change the hardware provided in a laptop than a desktop computer, so new functions that

depend on different hardware configurations are further off-limits. More fundamentally, both hardware and operating interfaces for mobile phones are far less accessible to the would-be hacker. As we will see below, mobile phones may be even more important than computers in the context of activist uses of ICTs. Additionally, digitisation of different information forms such as photographs and sound and video recordings offer great potential for activists who seek to produce their own media (Juris 2005), but the codes and protocols behind the relevant devices, and even the patented, proprietary file formats on which they depend, are still further removed from the experimental, rule-breaking hands of the hacker.

In defining the hacker, Kirkpatrick specifically points to the actions of '*writing their own code in programming language, or changing code in an existing system*' (2004, 118). If we understand hacking in this way, then the preceding points indicate that the barriers to hackers have been raised. This should not be taken to imply that code-level hacking is impossible within activist circles; Tim Jordan evidences quite the opposite in his contribution to this volume. Nevertheless, work at the hardware or code levels of modern ICT devices does require increasing levels of technical knowledge, access to some of which is carefully restricted. But the trends indicated above also open up opportunities for different kinds of application of the hacker attitude. We might profitably broaden the notion of the 'hack' away from its focus on code-level work with computers. Indeed, as Jordan and Taylor describe it:

> 'the essential attribute of a hack resides in the eclectic pragmatism with which hackers characteristically approach any technology' (2004, 7; original emphasis).

One of their interviewees uses the apparently trivial example of boiling water for tea in a coffee maker and explained that hacking:

> 'pertains to any field of technology … Because you're using the technology in a way its not supposed to be used' (ibid.).

In a world where many devices come 'network-ready', we should look far beyond what is inside the PC case sitting on the desk. Identifying a wider system as the potential object of hacking encourages examination of linkages between any two devices that can exchange information. The minimal specification of the hacker attitude described above is equally as applicable to this broader system level as it is to code-level software hacking. The central concern is not the precise phenomenology of the interaction with a technological device, but rather the willingness to explore a system, to learn its characteristics, and to come up with innovative ways of using it.

One danger in broadening the concept of the 'hack' away from a particular kind of physically recognisable exchange between individual and computer is that it may become impossible to distinguish between a hack, on the one hand, and a sophisticated use of available technologies, on the other. The first answer to this is to refine our conception of innovation, thus allowing a closer reading of what characterises a hack. Particular technologies have always offered different blends of potentials and constraints. Even the original hardware hackers were dependent on prefabricated computer kits to build their computers (Kirkpatrick 2004, 26). While the hacker may reconfigure the components in numerous ways and, perhaps, add functionality through home built components, they will always run up against hard limits that are produced by designers' decisions. Similarly, software hackers are constrained by both their hardware and the code level and language they choose to work with. The inclusion of 'elegant simplicity' as a defining feature of the 'good hack' flows from awareness of such limitations among the early hackers. Hard limits indicate the difference between innovation through hacking and pure invention. The hacker uses tools already available to achieve something new. For this reason we should examine what can be done with technologies – that is, their functionalities – rather than a technical specification of how they work. We may consider the advertised, intended uses of a device or system to be its *manifest functionalities.* Manifest functionalities are prominent in both advertisements and user manuals, and require little creativity or sophisticated understanding on the part of the user to be applicable. At the other end of the scale are *latent functionalities*. These are the applications that, while being enabled in some way by a device

or system, are not made obvious to the user and may not have been intended by the designer. At the furthest reaches, hackers may find a use for a technology that was simply inconceivable to the designer, perhaps by adding new hardware or writing new code. Even there, the potential must have exited in the system for the hacker to have anything with which to work. More commonly, however, new uses are closer to the original specification, as in the coffee maker example mentioned above. The utility of the distinction between manifest and latent functionalities lies in helping to specify what 'counts' as a hack. A use of any technological device that goes beyond the manifest functionalities evidences the hacker attitude, at least in the minimal form specified above, because it requires a level of understanding of the system and creativity with its potential that takes one beyond the manual and beyond the configured relationship of user to device.[2]

The boundaries between hacker and user, and between manifest and latent functionalities, inevitably remain a little fuzzy. This is not least because designers sometimes seek to build flexibility or extensibility into their systems. In such cases the whole notion of an 'intended' use for a particular technology is problematic. The second answer to the problem of distinguishing between a hack and a sophisticated use of technology is, therefore, epistemological. If, like Kirkpatrick, we take the user and hacker attitudes as ideal typical analytical constructs then we might accept that there is no a priori statement that we can make that would answer every borderline case (2004, xi). Rather, the analyst must consider both the general context of action and the specific features of the range of empirical cases available. The value of the concepts used here is proven, not by the imputation of the reality of our categories, but in the degree to which they aid interpretation of the available data; they are valuable just to the extent that they offer analytical purchase on empirical facts. In the remainder of this chapter, I hope to show that these categories do indeed aid the comprehension of a variety of forms of activity that constitute anti-war protest in the information age.

2. For further development of the distinction between manifest and latent functionality, see Gillan, Pickerill & Webster 2008, ch. 7.

THE USER ATTITUDE: FINDING EFFICIENT TOOLS FOR MOVEMENT ACTION

Given the sheer scale of recent anti-war protest, it is unsurprising to find that it is a richly diverse movement that has been responsible for mobilisations like that of 15th February 2003. Diversity of participation may be registered on a range of dimensions (Pickerill & Webster 2006), but what is of relevance here is the different kinds of organisations represented in the movement. Four examples will give some indication of the range of group structures involved in contemporary anti-war activism. First, the descriptions of 'everyday' technological sophistication that began this chapter were organised by a core group of less than ten activists involved in creating the Faslane 365 (F365) campaign, and put at the service of hundreds of individuals who, organised into smaller blockading groups, took part in protests at the submarine base over the course of a year (interviews, Anna-Linnéa Rundberg and Adam Conway, 2006). Second, within the same broad anti-war and peace movement are also found much larger and more formal organisations such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), which has had a democratic structure of individual members and affiliated organizations providing a steady income stream since the 1950s. As a result, CND can maintain office space in central London with a small core of full time staff supported by a larger group of volunteers. Third, the Stop the War Coalition (StWC) who co-organised the UK's biggest anti-war demonstrations with CND, rely primarily on individual donations to finance their activities. Their ability to mobilise has been dependent on dozens (and for some time hundreds) of local anti-war groups composed entirely of volunteers (interview, Kate Hudson, CND Chair and StWC Officer). Finally, Justice Not Vengeance (JNC) produce regular newsletters offering high quality analyses of recent political events, making use of publicly available, 'establishment' sources of information such as broadsheet newspapers and government reports. Occasionally, JNV have organised small protests, such as a public reading of the names of UK soldiers killed in Iraq, that have garnered coverage in mainstream news. JNV is largely run on the basis of individual donations, by three volunteers, with a wider group of supporters who meet occasionally and a much

larger group of email supporters (interviews, Maya Evans and Milan Rai, JNV activists).

Despite the variety of organisational forms these groups do, of course, have a number of goals and political beliefs in common, and it is this feature that generally defines a group of organisations and individuals as a movement (della Porta & Diani 1999, 15-25). Central to this chapter, however, are the features they share as collective actors. Collective action requires groups to engage in a set of informational and communicative tasks, which, for present purposes, we may divide into representation, decision-making and coordination. In the following paragraphs I present instances of some of the most common responses from over sixty interviewees who were asked in depth about their use of information technologies in activist work. As we will see, ICTs have been widely adopted for their manifest functionalities, and are now deeply embedded each area of activity.

Representation

The representation of ideas, critiques and rationales for action have always formed a central component of social movement activity, which is an idea captured in the wealth of literature on interpretative framing (Johnston & Noakes 2005). Control of the media of representation has frequently been sought by movement groups as is evident from, for instance, the important role played by newspapers in far left organisations in the UK, who have often owned their own printing presses (Allen 1985). In this respect, internet technologies offer clear benefits to movement groups as low cost means for the dissemination of alternative analyses of political events. These representations may be aimed at the general public, or at a closer group of supporters and email subscribers. One campaigner at the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) noted that storing information on the web offered savings in both financial terms and in the amount of work required of the central office:

> 'postage mainly, paper… it means it's more accessible, and we would expect less requests from our volunteer people' (interview, Steve Whiting).

The speed of dissemination is also clearly important, with another interviewee stating that

> 'it's astonishing how quickly so many people become au fait with the arguments' (interview, Lindsey German).

For some groups, the representation of ideas is the core function: JNV's primary purpose is collating and distributing arguments and factual materials deemed potentially useful for other peace activists. For others, the point of informing supporters and the general public is to mobilise participation in protest events. Kate Hudson distinguished clearly between a '*campaigning*' and '*information organization*'. CND's website, she explained, while 'as accurate and up-to-date as possible' does not set out to be 'the last word in scientific information'. It rather aims to be '*the last word in campaigning effectively on nuclear weapons*' (interview, Kate Hudson). StWC's use of their website is also focused in this way:

> ...[i]f something big breaks on one day, then on the homepage I might quickly write a short piece to do with that, and links to do with that. Nearly always, given the type of campaign we are, it will be links to some activity that we're involved in, which is the main function of our website – to actually support activity (interview, StWC office manager and website developer.)

As will be discussed below, many anti-war movement groups are focused primarily on protest events. While these certainly require detailed planning, information sharing and decision making to carry out, this focus also means that groups' websites, understood as presenting the public face of the organisation, seek to encourage action above all else.

It was commonly recognised among interviewees that the Web is a 'phenomenal resource, absolutely phenomenal … [for] the resources, the information you can access' (interview, Steve Whiting). Milan Rai described his previous campaigning against sanctions in Iraq during the 1990s, wherein

> ...[h]aving the text of the UN Security Council resolutions was crucial … and the only way we could get those was from the UN information office in London, which had to request them from New York… it would be weeks of delay before we got these Security council resolutions… foundational documents like that suddenly became immediately accessible. And it did make a really big difference to our work. (interview, Milan Rai)

It is unsurprising then, that with a positive experience of using such resources, anti-war activists increasingly see a part of their work as the creation of electronically available information sources. Whatever their particular goals and modes of action, both the creation of group websites and the distribution of mass email messages offer anti-war groups a speedy route through which to represent their analyses and inform potential supporters about opportunities for protest.

Making Decisions

Decision making was another everyday task for which interviewees from a wide range of groups praised the utility of ICTs. Email discussions, usually utilising listserv software attached to particular subscription-based groups, were utilised by many as decision making forums. Typically, interviewees enjoyed the ability to work together without the need to organise a time and place to meet, so that '*decision making can happen where people don't have the same schedule*' (Jesse Schust, Voices in the Wilderness UK). The asynchronous nature of email communication means that 'you can all work at your own pace and your own timescale ... and across time-zones as well' (Jane Tallents, Faslane 365; cf. Häyhtiö & Rinne in this volume), thus making the best use of available human resources. This is particularly important since most anti-war activists juggle their political commitments with many others. Even where an organisation has office space and paid workers:

> [Email] makes for ease of decision-making. Our Officer team is the centre of the decision making process, there are five of us, we meet less frequently physically because we're in email communication… And for things like getting agreement about leaflets, for example … you

> can agree the whole thing in five minutes, whereas previously it would have taken much longer (interview, Kate Hudson).

Furthermore, some interviewees also felt that the text-based nature of these communications also helped improve the quality of decision making because '*you consider your position more carefully, writing something compared to when you're speaking*' (interview, Tom Shelton, CND Office Worker). Similarly, this is:

> 'an important way for people to share views, who might not be confident enough to do it in person. I find it easier if I've got a problem or want to describe how I'm feeling to actually write it down and amend it a bit, so you actually know what you're saying' (interview, Anna Liddle, CND Education Worker).

Anna added that '*you can actually research the facts and send what you mean, you can even add references from a website*'. However, almost every interviewee who discussed the benefits of email in this sphere also emphasised that more complex or politically loaded decisions worked less well over email. Without careful planning of the timescale of decisions, discussions had a tendency to revolve around a number of contentious points without resolution. The lack of spontaneity was also a frequently cited problem: *'electronic resources are really important in organising.... But also it's equally important to come to meetings... where we see each other face-to-face, because it's really hard to bounce ideas off each other through emails*' (interview, Maya Evans). Where a high level of awareness of the limitations of computer-mediated communications is present, this aided the deployment of ICTs in a manner that offered significant efficiency gains in their organizational tasks.

Coordination

As noted above, while groups such as JNV define their activity squarely in terms of information, most use informational tools in work that is driven by protest events. Whether small-group, high-risk actions like F365's blockades of a very high security naval base or CND and StWC's joint-organised demonstrations of hundreds of thousands marching in the capital, protest events tend to be unpredictable. It

is in the coordination of such events that the 'anytime, anywhere' nature of the mobile phone comes to the fore (Castells et al. 2006). One interviewee indicates the strategic benefit of the mobile phone at demonstrations where police sought to block protesters' movements. This common tactic involves the creation of police cordons that block groups of protesters into side streets. Armed with their mobile phones, those in the cordon can phone others to update them on police tactics, so they *'can then organise in another place... there's more spontaneity and flexibility'* (interview Steve Whiting). But the gains from 'perpetual contact' are not limited to these more radical forms of action. In relation to the more orderly national march:

> ...[w]e don't have the hassle any more like we used to. At the first Stop the War demonstration someone had to walk up and down the whole length of the Embankment to try and find the flipping bus - it was a pain you know. Whereas now we can coordinate people to get back on the buses a lot more easily with mobile phones and I think that makes a difference to people coming because they're not so likely to get lost (interview, Chris Goodwin, Leicester Campaign to Stop the War).

Activists' mobile phone use relates clearly to what Ling and Yttri describe, in a study of everyday mobile phone users in Norway, as 'micro-coordination': '*largely a functional and instrumental activity*' (2002,139). Clearly it is not just activists that enjoy the greater flexibility and speed of making arrangements with friends and colleagues; rather this is the core purpose of the mobile phone and has simply been transposed into the context of protest events.

The brief presentation above focuses on the practical benefits of technologies that have been most frequently described by interviewees from a wide range of anti-war groups in the UK. At this level we see a quite straightforward adoption of ICTs by users taking advantage of manifest functionalities. The capacious store of information available on the Web is utilised by activists to inform themselves. They also see potential in the speed and relative cheapness of publishing for representing their own groups in that sphere. The asynchronous and place independent characteristics of email communication come

to the fore particularly in simpler decision making processes and planning of events. And the ability for spontaneous communications with permanently connected friends and allies through the mobile phone has proved invaluable at all sorts of events. Anti-war activists therefore relate to ICTs with the 'user attitude', taking 'off-the-shelf' technologies and picking up applications of interest.

This is not to say, however, either that these benefits come without any drawbacks or limitations, or that the practical benefits are the only consequences of technology adoption. In relation to the former, activists' concerns about accessibility, surveillance, limited relationships with audiences through the Web and the difficulties of creating trust through CMC have been documented (Pickerill 2003, Gillan forthcoming). In relation to the latter, it is clear that ICT's offer social and emotional benefits too. One interviewee described email discussion lists as:

> 'just so good … it is a relief to be able to talk to like minded people. It is also very helpful to be kept in touch with what is going on both within the Society and in the world in general' (focus group, Quaker activist).

Similarly, another described the importance of staying connected through the Web: 'if you're an activist and you're not connected to the relevant websites in your area... its possibly a lot more isolated, and there's issues of morale and maintenance which websites can help overcome' (interview, Milan Rai). Another explained that one benefit of attending national demonstrations was being able to reconnect with friends who lived far away, and that mobile phones were very important in being able to make plans and find each other (interview, CND employee). These complicating features may have heightened relevance in the activist context. The quotations from the Quaker activist and Milan Rai, above, are particularly sensitive to the need for activists to find other 'like minded' people, lest they face 'isolation'; recognising the difficulties of maintaining a position outside of the mainstream. Limitations, as well as benefits, are tied to the particular context. This is clear, for instance, in relation to concerns about surveillance which can be vital for groups planning protests that the police wish to stop.

Despite the particular areas of emphasis that may flow from the specific context of technology use, the limitations adumbrated above are inherent features of the technologies in their standard configurations. And the social benefits arising from ICT adoption are really a result of human interaction, per se, rather than the medium through which it takes place. What remains, therefore, is the fact that the practical purposes to which anti-war activists put new ICTs are just those purposes to which the designers of these technologies had intended. This highlights the similarity, at the level of informational and communicative needs at least, between activist groups and any other purposeful organisation, whether they are businesses, voluntary sector associations or government agencies. Technologies designed with those other organisations in mind are highly pertinent for activist groups too, and so benefits arise from engaging with a user attitude, making use of suitable applications without trying to alter the technologies they use. This attitude is rarely made explicit, but the evidence above suggests that it does inform the interaction between people and technologies in the context of the anti-war movement.

THE HACKER ATTITUDE: REIMAGINING TECHNOLOGIES, RESTRUCTURING COMMUNICATIONS

Politically motivated hacking has been well documented among certain groups of activists, such as movements directly concerned with technology or media and those opposing neo-liberal globalization. Key examples display a high level of sophistication in code-level work with computers in order to write software programmes that may be used in a variety of forms of action against identified political opponents (Jordan & Taylor 2004; see also Jordan and Hintikka in this volume). But such activities are largely absent from the discussions of technology offered by our interviewees from across the UK peace and anti-war movements. As suggested in the first subsection of this chapter, this is to be expected given the widespread uptake of ICTs and the increasing level of knowledge required for innovative engagement with them. But the minimal specification of the hacker attitude is intended to enable a focus on creative uses of technology that do not take the

form of code-level work, but nevertheless display the key attitudinal characteristics. The following material presents a series of vignettes that illustrate the application of the hacker attitude in the activist context. Examples are drawn from a somewhat broader examination of contemporary activism than the interviews cited above and, for this reason, two methodological caveats apply. First, the statements below are necessarily less suitable for generalisation, either to the anti-war movement or to wider trends in protest. Nevertheless, the purpose here is to explore the further horizons of activist uses of technology without any implications about whether such forms are likely to spread or to meet with success. As we will see, this exploration will enable further reflections on the implications of the attitudes that activists bring to technology. Second, in examining secondary sources of data it is noteworthy that the 'behind the scenes' work of organising and mobilising often becomes obscured as commentators – scholars as well as journalists – typically focus on the public activities of movement groups. As above, I will use divisions of organisational work as representation and coordination. Underlying processes of decision making are, unfortunately, rendered invisible in most secondary sources and will not be considered in detail below. Under 'representation', we see the representation of ideas as an end in itself; that is, communication becomes the main purpose of the action. Under 'coordination', we will see communication as a means, with efficient, effective protest as the ends.

Representation

A striking illustration of the application of the 'hacker attitude' in representing political views occurred around the Republican National Convention (RNC) in New York in 2004. These protests were a critique of George Bush ahead of the US presidential election the same year. The range of political messages brought by protest participants was very wide but, for many, this was an anti-war demonstration and thus motivated by many of the same concerns as much of the activity described above (Democracy Now! 2004). In preparing for the demonstration, a graduate engineering student, Joshua Kinberg, designed and built a 'dot-matrix graffiti bike'. This was a pedal cycle mounted with computer-controlled chalk aerosol cans that could spray messages

onto the pavement. Kindberg's website, Bikes Against Bush, enabled visitors to write short message that could be transmitted directly to the 'printer' via his mobile phone and bicycle-mounted laptop. Messages could thereby be submitted from anywhere with Internet access and almost instantaneously sprayed as graffiti onto the pavements outside the convention. Kindberg demonstrated his technology, but was never able to use it in protest since in the lead-up to the demonstrations he was arrested, and his equipment was seized, by the New York Police Department (Singel 2007).

Regardless of the impact of the protest, Kindberg's design is illustrative in two ways. Firstly, it clearly represents an application of the hacker attitude. In order to piece together the website, his mobile phone and his home made 'printer', Kindberg needed a sophisticated understanding of modern systems of ICTs. Moreover, he clearly made an innovative use of the technologies he had access to; even though the potential for these connections existed in the devices he owned, he brought latent functionalities to the fore in a way that was certainly outside of the expectations of their inventors. Second, the system designed in this way was novel specifically in relation to the communication structure it created. The mobile phone is, of course, intended to be a one-to-one communication device but in this system is placed as a single node mediating an ad hoc many-to-many communication system. That is to say, by hooking the phone to his website, Kindberg stretched its capabilities to allow many-to-one communications and by hooking it up to his graffiti printer he produced one-to-many communication. The result was a horizontal structure that encouraged people unable to attend the demonstration to represent their views through a system that was technologically mediated but, nevertheless, transparent with regards to meaning. The intention, if not the result, was to widen participation at the RNC demonstration by enabling those not present to take part.

Where the communication of ideas is a form of protest, we must consider both the originators of protest messages and the audience for them. While the example above shows potential in reaching new originators, the audience for Kindberg's relayed graffiti would have been identical to that of the placards typically carried at such events. Another case, however, shows some potential in reaching new audiences. Joseph

DeLappe, a Professor of Art at University of Nevada Reno, spent several hours a week for most of 2006 reciting the names of US soldiers killed in Iraq in the context of an online, multiplayer computer game (Clarren 2006). The game, America's Army, was developed by the US army and features team combat missions set in the Middle East, with players armed with standard US military equipment. The game is explicitly a recruitment tool, and is given away for free and heavily promoted among those sought to join the US military. Repeatedly logging in to the game under the name 'dead-in-Iraq', DeLappe simply dropped his weapon and used the chat interface of the game to give the name, age and date of death of all US military personal killed in the invasion and occupation. These messages were seen by all other players logged into the same game at the same time.

The recital of names of war dead is hardly a unique form of protest and memorial; indeed, Maya Evans of JNV was arrested in October 2005 for doing so outside Downing Street in London. But DeLappe is clearly reaching a new audience, utilising both the technological structure of the game, and the social structure within which it is set, to target people likely to be sympathetic to the US military. *Salon* columnist Rebecca Clarren (2006) quotes DeLappe as arguing that 'online spaces like "America's Army" are a critical place to interact with the world:

> "I'm going to where these impressionable kids are spending their time," he says. "If you get them where they live, and this causes them to think, even for an instant, then I think it's effective"'.

Another interviewer quotes DeLappe saying '*you have a fantasy about killing and being in the military, but nobody dies, there are no consequences. It's a complete fabrication*' (DeLappe, quoted in Kuo 2006). Moreover, DeLappe's action is self-consciously rule-breaking: *We come into these games to do A, B, and C, not C, D, and F. My response is to say, who says you're only allowed to do those things in these spaces?'* (ibid.).

The two stories presented above are very different. Kindberg used his technical understanding to produce a horizontal, many-to-many communication structure that enabled wider participation in public protest. DeLappe, conversely, produced a vertical, one-to-many com-

munication structure in which, notwithstanding the abusive replies he received from other game players, he dominated. But at the same time, he used his understanding of the structure and context of a particular computer game in order to communicate with a highly pertinent social group rarely reached by the messages of protesters. What both examples have in common, therefore, is the application of elements of the hacker attitude in imagining new purposes for particular ICTs, utilised in order to bring something new to the representation of political ideas.

Coordination

Returning to the RNC demonstrations of 2004 highlights further examples of the use of ICTs. Indeed, technological innovation was such a strong theme there that one *Village Voice* commentator claimed:

> 'Thanks to this week's protests … the streets of Manhattan have become an outdoor gallery for the latest trends in the fusion of art and digital technology' (Dayal 2004).

One of the most popular systems in use was TxtMob: a method of distributing text messages on a large scale. The system was designed by Tad Hirsch with a group called the Institute of Applied Autonomy and required individuals to subscribe to groups they were interested in through entering their mobile phone number on a website interface. Once at the demonstration, any subscriber could send a text message to one number which, via Hirsch's own server, would be forwarded to all other subscribers. The system was used frequently by a range of groups, such as: protesters keeping track of location and behaviour of police, 'critical mass' bicycle riders staying informed of traffic flow; and volunteer medics in order to attend areas where violence had broken out or teargas had been used (Di Justo 2004; Hirsch & Henry 2005). Like Kindberg's graffiti bike, the key to innovation here was to combine the web and the mobile phone in order to create a many-to-many communication structure, except here communication was utilised as a means to more efficient and effective protest rather than, as in the Kindberg case, as an end and a protest in itself.

Both the TxtMob and the graffiti bike systems suffered a highly significant drawback, however, since both were centralized through one key point in the system. Kindberg's ambition was ultimately thwarted when the NYPD seized his equipment before the start of the demonstrations. TxtMob suffered problems because some mobile phone networks stopped passing its messages either because of network overload, spam protocols or police action (Castells et al. 2006, 202-204). Perhaps more importantly, after legal wrangles between protesters and New York City over large numbers of arrests, the city administration has served a subpoena on Hirsch, demanding the text of hundreds of messages and the phone numbers of their senders (Moynihan 2008).

There have been several well-documented cases of the use of text messages without an intervening, centralised point of relay. Most notable is the use of such messages in coordinating protests against Philippine President Joseph Estrada, who was ultimately forced from office in early 2001. Mobile phone use was prominent not just during demonstrations, but also, throughout 2000, in propagating anti-Estrada messages such as news related to government corruption, hostile slogans and satirical jokes (Katz & Aarkhus 2002, 2-3). The ability to communicate without a single intervening node increases both the security of the communication network and level of trust between those using it. It would hardly be surprising if the police were among the subscribers to TxtMob groups at the RNC demonstrations, nor, indeed if they had used the network to spread disinformation (cf. Dwyer 2005). Security benefits flow from changes the structure of communications. While the RNC case evidences the creation of a many-to-many structure, in the Estrada case we see something that may be best described as 'few-to-few-to-few…'. Messages were simply forwarded on to friends and acquaintances and this increases trust in the network because there is a closer fit between this particular information network and pre-existing social networks. Furthermore, such communications likely benefitted from the long-established '*strength of weak ties*' (Granovetter 1973).When text messages are passed on through social networks by named individuals, to the extent that the message seems to be true and important to the receiver, it is likely that it will be passed on beyond the densely networked clusters of friends

and allies from which it originates, into the wider (mobile phone owning) society.

One final example returns us to anti-war activism in the UK. In the most technologically sophisticated intervention by the StWC to date, we can see an example that mixes different modes of communication to achieve both the coordination of action and the representation of a particular view. In early 2007, the StWC promoted an anti-war single by a band constructed as a spoof of Tony Blair's university rock group, Ugly Rumours. They produced a cover of the anti-war song, 'War (What is it Good For?)' which was made available as a download only release (Moran 2007). The intention of the group was clear, to attempt to embarrass the Prime Minister and gain attention and significant funds for StWC. Success depended on enough people buying the single in the same week, to push it as high into the singles charts, and therefore into the national media's attention, as possible. And for the individual protester, buying the single counted as both a symbol of dissent and an active way to support a key anti-war organization.

The song was released shortly after a change in regulations relating to the official singles charts that allowed songs released as 'download only' to be counted, as well as those distributed on CDs. Beforehand, the costs for physical production and distribution would have made it impossible for a protest group to successfully promote a single. However, the single sold well, achieving a top-ten position in the mid-week charts and thus gaining publicity from a wide range of media. Success was produced partly by organisers spotting a relevant change in the regulatory structure governing the use of particular technologies. As such, it represents a wide understanding of the system, and its application to protest is, from the point of view of regulators, an unintended possibility. The mode of promotion and distribution used to generate the sales offered further evidence of technological understanding and creativity. The band performed on two high profile national demonstrations in London and Glasgow in the week of the single's release. An arrangement had been made so that participants at the demonstrations could purchase the single simply by sending a text message to an automated service that enabled the sender to subsequently download the song from an online distribution outlet. During Ugly Rumours' performances, instructions for buying the single were

given repeatedly and shown on a large outdoor screen (field notes, London, February 2007). Both at the demonstration and on ordering the single, protesters were encouraged to send the message on to everyone in their phone's address book – recalling the potential power of integrating a political message with social networks. A humorous video for the song was also produced and made available through YouTube. It seems, therefore, that StWC had picked up some of the techniques of 'viral marketing', getting their message into a wide range of outlets in a form that was likely to be passed on through social networks. Doing so required piecing together a number of different modes of communication in a novel configuration in order to both represent a protest message to a wider audience and to coordinate participants to help promote the single.

In each of the above examples we can see the application of key aspects of the hacker attitude to activists' interactions with technology. In relation to the technologies utilised each case illustrates some novelty in the communication structures created, especially in adopting the mobile phone in ways that enable communication among larger groups than the device was intended for. Given the inherently collective nature of social movement activism, which stems both from their aims to promote particular ideas among a wider population and from the necessity to organise and coordinate around events, it is logical that innovative uses of ICTs would take this direction. The one example that doesn't increase the number of communicants is DeLappe's intervention into the US military computer game in which he reverses this process, taking a mode of communication intended for group discussion an using it for his personal, political broadcast. For this reason, it is perhaps unsurprising that that DeLappe's messages were reacted to with hostility. This echoes Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi's use, in the 2004 regional elections, of 13 million 'personal' text messages to voters, which faced an indignant popular reaction (Castells et al. 2007, 211). In these cases the messages were uninvited and essentially one-way, since any response would reasonably be presumed to be ineffective. The comparison between the intervention in America's Army and the other innovations described above is instructive, moreover, because it highlights divergent concerns with participants and audience. One purported benefit of Internet communications is in broadening

the audience for radical media sources but the website designers and media officers among the interviewees for this research were concerned that it was impossible to know who the online audience was. There is certainly a general suspicion that people coming to the website will already have some sympathy, or at least familiarity, with the group's arguments and that different strategies are therefore required for wider outreach (Gillan, Pickerill & Webster 2008, ch. 3). DeLappe's case was different because he self-consciously sought a new audience whereas the other examples described above are all more concerned with widening the number of participants, rather than the number of spectators. The more common innovations, then, demonstrate a concern with increasing the quality of information flow and engagement among protest participants and the social networks to which they belong.

Conclusions

This chapter began with a reminder of the familiarity of engagement with technologically sophisticated information systems in everyday social movement practice in the UK. This mirrors developments in wider society in a country where internet penetration had reached around 66 per cent in 2007 (ITU 2007). As in wider society, activists bring different attitudes to their engagement with technology, varying particularly around the willingness to experiment with technological tools in order to create new functions from those already available. Notions of the hacker and user attitudes help us understand the different forms of ICT activity we see evidenced in political activism.

The hacker attitude, in its minimal specification set out above, indicates a commitment to the discovery of latent functionalities enabled by any technology, which allows the application of technologies to new tasks. Whatever the precise behaviours evidenced by a particular hack, it should demonstrate a good level of understanding of an information system that enables the creation of relatively simple new uses that somehow break the rules codified into the devices being used. In all the cases described above the rules being broken concerned the communication structures within which particular devices were designed to operate. Most commonly we saw the insertion of the mobile phone into more horizontal structures of communication, which enabled information sharing or political claims making among groups

of activists, thereby stretching the benefits of perpetual contact beyond the one-to-one communications typical of the phone.

The user attitude, in contrast, is evidenced where activists make use of the manifest functionalities purposively designed into technological systems; adopting, without adapting, technologies that may have been primarily intended for uses in other administrative contexts. Since movement groups have always needed to perform many of the same informational and communicative tasks as any other organisation it makes sense for them to adopt technologies in this way. The web is cherished as a vast store of information and seen as a new sphere in which one ought to be represented; email allows for asynchronous communication, valuable in both information sharing and decision-making; and the mobile phone allows perpetual contact which has great utility for micro-coordination around events. It is these sorts of activities that have led activists to embed technologies deeply into their everyday action.

The costs of innovation, in terms of expertise required and the time taken to develop new applications and encourage their wider adoption, make the hacker attitude relatively uncommon. At least in anti-war activism, where the urgency of action has tended to outweigh the potential benefits of experimentation, straightforward adoption of ICTs is the norm. Activists' practices are not unreflexive – indeed, there is evidence presented above that suggests the careful application of manifest functionalities that take account of the political nature of decision-making, the potential social benefits and drawbacks of ICT use and the security concerns related to electronic communications. (Such evidence is amplified in Gillan, Pickerill & Webster 208, ch. 7.) The positive implications here clearly relate to efficiency. Conversely, it is where social movement groups' activities differ from those organisations in the private and public sectors for which most ICTs are primarily intended – such as where rapid but deliberative communication across horizontally organised networks is desirable – that innovation is particularly valuable. It is particularly in these areas, therefore, that the benefits of applying the hacker attitude may be most keenly felt.

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ARIADNE VROMEN

Political change and the internet in Australia: introducing GetUp

INTRODUCTION

> "We can give people an opportunity to say stuff, be heard, to channel their opinions to decision makers… We are trying to take that movement stuff, social movements and political movements, and take it online, again it gets translated offline as well at the end of the campaign, but we are putting stuff online so it is giving people an opportunity to be effective, where they haven't been able to be effective through some of those little offline campaigns" (Interviewee 2).

This chapter explores how the internet can be used in innovative ways to challenge established relationships of contact between citizens and their parliamentary representatives. The distinction between "conventional" and "non-conventional" individualised forms of participation is problematised by focusing on the use of the internet to facilitate collective action by new communities of political actors who set their own political agendas. I argue that existing understandings of social movement action as being distinct from interest group activities are questioned by these new forms of well resourced, internet-based participation that disrupt established power relationships. I will especially engage with, and expand upon, the arguments presented by Andrew Chadwick (2007) on internet mobilisations representing novel forms of "organisation hybridity" that utilise instances of "repertoire switching". These ideas will be applied to an in-depth case study of a new, Australian, primarily internet-based organisation called GetUp that emerged in 2005.

LITERATURE REVIEW – THE INTERNET AND INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The Internet provides *new* ways of participating in political processes, and thus merits distinctive analysis. The rapid uptake of mobile phones, digital television and the Internet have all occurred in the last decade and Stanyer argues that this has created opportunities for an increase in individualised political expression and participation (2005, 21). These individualised forms of participation include traditional modes such as voting, writing letters to MPs, donating money and non-traditional modes that are facilitated by new technology, including online petition signing, boycotts, blogging, chat rooms, email chain letters and SMS (e.g. to media and politicians). Non-traditional modes of individualised participation are often quicker, require little time commitment and are often convenient for expressing a political viewpoint (see Stanyer 2005, 22; Chadwick 2007, 287; Xenos and Bennett 2007, 49; Häyhtiö & Rinne and Rättilä in this volume).

In terms of thinking more specifically about the internet as a political space for participation we can see that it has three individualised, primary uses:

1. as an information source: whereby sites provide information about political issues, existing political groups and campaigns (Karakaya Polat 2005, 436; see also Montgomery et al 2004).

2. as a communication medium, in four distinctive sub-types: con versations that are one to one dialogue, such as email; the aggregation of information where many people communicate with a single agency, such as online voting, and online petitions; as a form of broadcast from one centre to many people, such as personal websites and blogs; and as group dialogue where there is interaction among a large group of senders and receivers, such as in forums and online chat (Christopher Weare cited in Karakaya Polat 2005, 446).

3. as a virtual public sphere: here internet sites are 'providing a platform for rational critical debate rather than simple registration

> of individual views through information aggregation tools such as polls or surveys' (Karakaya Polat 2005, 448). The focus is on the processes involved in opinion formation and sharing, rather than chiefly on how opinions are expressed.

Lincoln Dahlberg (2001) has provided a related typology for analysing internet based communication and participation. He categorises sites as either liberal, communitarian or deliberative, based on the forms of democratic process that it creates. Liberal sites assist the expression of individual interests, enabling individuals access to government information and means to communicate with institutionalised political actors (Dahlberg 2001, 619-620). Many e-government initiatives would fit here as they represent a top-down consumer model of politics and often simply provide electronic access to government offline services (see Geiselhart 2004, 87). Communitarian sites enhance communal values and build communities of interest, in effect serving to connect people with similar values and concerns. The focus in communitarian sites is the exchange of information through decentralised interaction (Dahlberg 2001). Other internet analysts liken this community building to a form of trust and bonding social capital found in like-minded communities (Chen et al. 2006)

Dahlberg's third type of site is labelled as Deliberative, and is based on a normative, Habermasian ideal whereby the Internet is the means for an expansion of the (non-exclusive, centralised, relevant to all) public sphere for rational-critical citizen discourse. Discourse on deliberative sites is reflexive and respectful, reaching collective agreement for the public good. To be classified as deliberative by Dahlberg these sites need to be autonomous from state and corporate power (2001, 616). This kind of deliberative focus has the potential for some authors (see Chen et al. 2006) to create a superior form of bridging social capital that, potentially, transcends essential community differences through debate.

There are two major elements missing from these typologies. The first is how to evaluate sites that primarily use the internet as an information sharing conduit based on user-generated content to then facilitate offline participation. The approach of these kinds of sites needs to be considered as more communitarian and expressively

oriented than the information collection and aggregation elements of Dahlberg's liberal sites. The second is central to this chapter and is a complex understanding of social movement oriented disruption, or protest, as a function of internet use. Both deliberative and communitarian views see a focus on commonality and consensus building in political exchange. Peter Dahlgren suggests that we should value people's desire to participate and that online political engagement is allowing people to engage in democratic practice (2005, 158-159). However, he critiques the Habermasian position that the deliberative value of discussion determines its democratic value as this privileges elite modes of communication. Dahlgren sees that online public spheres are important mainly because of how they draw in a wider array of people to form communities and thus subsequent mobilisation and debate becomes more significant than deliberative consensus (2005, 155-157; see also Cammaerts & Audenhove 2005). Thus these classifications based on individual political engagement do not allow for the internet to be understood as a site or tool for the collective expression of contention and dissent. For this kind of analysis we need to turn to specific literature that looks at the uptake of the internet by social movements.

FROM INTEREST GROUPS TO SOCIAL MOVEMENTS USING THE INTERNET

There is now a well established literature that look at how existing offline interest groups and social movement organisations have successfully harnessed the internet as a campaigning tool (for example, see Pickerill 2003; Meikle 2002; Dahlgren and Olsson 2007; Calenda & Mosca 2007 and Mosca in this volume). This literature tends to look at how the internet is used as a campaign tool for offline events such as the 2003 anti-war protests (e.g. Carty and Onyett 2006), or by established and/or new offline organisations to reinforce their activist position (see Rolfe 2005). For example, Pickerill (2003) researches diverse environmental organisations, from radical direct action protesters to the political lobbying of Friends of the Earth, and demonstrates how they use the internet to broaden campaigns, forge new identities and create social change.

The literature looking at the interplay between the internet and social movements is broadly influenced by ideas of radical democracy and contentious social movements, and moves away from the consensus and deliberative orientation of much of the normative political participation literature cited in the previous section. Utilising ideas based on agonistic, radical democracy derived from the theorising of Chantal Mouffe (2000) it is easier to interpret the internet as a space for protest and disruption that challenges existing power relationships. Types of internet based action that fit here include email protests, communication disruptions, spam attacks, site graffiti and "cyberparody" such as culture jamming (see Dalhberg & Siapera 2007, 9). Lincoln Dahlberg (2007, 56) criticises deliberative approaches and alternatively offers three internet functions seen through the lens of radical democracy. First, that the internet provides space for members of groups who have marginalised opinions and ideas to develop "counter-publics"; second, the interactivity through the internet makes it possible for "politically diverse and geographically dispersed" groups to find shared points of identity and create shared "oppositional discourses"; and third, the internet is able to support both online and offline counter-publics to contest dominant ideas and discourses "and hence the contestation of the deliberations of the mainstream public sphere" (See also Paltemaa; Jordan in this volume) .

When these arguments are coupled with the nascent literature that looks at emergent forms of (mainly) internet only collective action some authors now argue that we ought to alter our entire perception and analysis of contemporary forms of collective action and social mobilisation (see Flanagin et al. 2006; Carty & Onyett 2006; Clark & Themudo 2006).

My research is concerned with an Australian organisation, GetUp that 'mimics' social movement action but is based online and uses liberal mechanisms to channel citizens opinions to decision-makers. Its obvious counterpart is MoveOn in the USA; an online organisation that has social movement origins and has been characterised as "attempt(ing) to combine net activism with meaningful political engagement" (Carty & Onyett 2006, 243). Andrew Chadwick (2007) has developed two useful concepts with which to analyse MoveOn: "organisational hybridity" and "repertoire switching". The concept of

organisational hybridity is used to demonstrate that MoveOn can not be classified simply using traditional organisational labels to understand collective action and mobilisation:

> "MoveOn sometimes behaves like an interest group, sometimes like a social movement, sometimes like the wing of a traditional party during an election campaign. Such organizational types could not work without the internet because the technologies set up complex interactions between the online and offline environment and the organisational flexibility required for fast 'repertoire switching' within a single campaign or from one campaign to the next" (Chadwick 2007, 284).

The focus on strategic repertoires is central to social movement theorising and Chadwick argues that the political use of the internet can represent uniting of "democratic experimentalism" with "non-hierarchical" social movements (Chadwick 2007, 285). The idea of "switching" mainly pertains to the blend of institutionally focused actions with a movement and broader public (or, "entrepreneurial") focus. It can also be seen in the blend of both offline and online strategies (ibid., 286). Chadwick also suggests that internet-based organisational hybridity enables mobilisation of citizens new to participation, especially young people, and that traditional and hierarchical participatory forms will be challenged to change their practices (ibid., 297).

In sum, it will be important to assess in this chapter whether, first, in analysis of GetUp's strategic repertoire we can confirm both liberal and radical democratic elements (as Chadwick would expect) in its use of the internet campaigning, while it largely sidesteps consensus-oriented communitarian and deliberative internet functions. Second, to illustrate whether organisational hybridity is operationalised though GetUp and whether there it represents a mobilisation of citizens new to political engagement and participation.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed qualitative and quantitative methodological approach and included four research techniques: semi-structured interviews, website analysis, media analysis (both traditional and new, ie. blogs) and original survey data with GetUp participants, conducted in August 2006. In detail these were:

- Interviews with three initiators and/or major creative influences on the organisation. They were either paid staff or Board members. These interviews were conducted in-person in mid 2006, they were recorded and mostly transcribed. This part of the research had Human Research Ethics approval, and the interviewees are anonymous for the purposes of this chapter. The interviewees ranged in age from 25 to 35, and were two men and one woman. Direct quotes from the interviews are used to illustrate analysis throughout.
- Site analysis involved an in-depth examination of the types of interactivity found on the site, and a listing of all political campaigns from mid 2005 to mid 2007.
- Mainstream media analysis was used to identify the agenda set ting roles and recognition of GetUp. This mainly meant collecting newspaper articles on the organisation and the individuals involved from the Factiva media search engine, from mid 2005-mid 2006. However, also included here are discussions of the organisation on high profile blogs and in broadcast media transcripts.
- Survey results from a questionnaire that was sent to all site users in September 2006. I co-designed the questionnaire with GetUp staff and board members and was able to include questions of interest to me such as on the participatory backgrounds of the individual site users. Only the results on demographic and participatory backgrounds are discussed here.

GetUp is an overtly political, campaign-based website. It is auspiced and funded by donations from individuals and the Australian union movement, and acts in coalition with progressive NGOs. It does not provide direct services. It represents itself as acting on behalf of 'progressive Australians' over issues currently being debated by the federal government.

GetUp was established in early-2005 by Jeremy Heimans and Dave Madden, two young Australians who had been working in the USA on similar internet based campaigning through Moveon.org. For the set-up they worked in close association with union groups such as Unions NSW. While their ongoing total revenue is unclear an article on Workers Online stated that GetUp had raised $1.5 million by August 2005 from a variety of unions and individuals who identified with progressive politics (see http://workers.labor.net.au/275/news6_getup.html), another radio interview transcript report has GetUp's executive director stating that they were able to fundraise $500,000 between July 2006 and July 2007 (see http://www.abc.net.au/sundayprofile/stories/s1972998.htm?backyard). GetUp interviewees stated that they do not accept funding from political parties or government agencies, and that most of their funding is from individual supporters. They were also adamant that funding does not "buy" campaigning priorities.

One interviewee described the original vision of GetUp as a movement of movements:

> "The initial intentions were to build alliances between the liberal middle class and the working class as political constituencies that have often been pitted against each other, yet they can be brought together in a political movement. And the thought was that if we had some sort of consistent organisation, where people who are politicised by individual movements can join something that would sustain their political engagement more broadly, then that would be a really important element of civil society activity in Australia" (Interviewee 1).

The organisation is structured around a small core of paid staff, led by Executive Director Brett Solomon who has a long history of paid work in non-government organisations such as Oxfam and Amnesty. There is a volunteer program and individuals are often recruited to work on particular campaigns, especially when offline work is needed. The Board, according to interviewees, advises on funding, community profile and strategic development. Initially the Board was purposefully constructed as multi-partisan, including activists who were also members of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), the Australian Greens and the Liberal Party. The sole Liberal, former federal party leader John Hewson, left soon after launch; and more recently two ALP Board members, Bill Shorten and Evan Thornley, left as soon as they were pre-selected for parliamentary seats. It is unclear who has joined the Board as replacements or even how the Board have an ongoing role setting strategic direction for the organisation now that the number of paid staff has grown. It is very difficult to obtain current accurate information on staff or board composition, or revenue total and sources. This non-transparent position, which is not unlike that of many political campaigning organisations, has nevertheless created controversy for GetUp (see Milne 2007).

There were 27 GetUp campaigns in its first two years of operation. They covered a broad diversity of progressive issues ranging from international issues such as climate change and the War in Iraq; to more Australian specific campaigns such as the repatriation of David Hicks from Guantanamo Bay, funding of the national media broadcaster (ABC) and indigenous health; to a very infrequent local area campaign target such the saving of ancient rock carvings in western Australia.

There are varying ways of interpreting the success of these campaigns. GetUp itself seems to measure success in terms of whether it achieves its legislative outcome. Thus some of the thresholds for the campaigns are set reasonably low. That is, rather than the "Politics out of Medicine" campaign outcome being set as changing government policy to fully legalise abortion in all circumstances and with all internationally available means the campaign focused on creating legislative change that would see the feasibility of introducing RU486 in Australia taken out of the hands of the federal Health Minister (Tony Abbott, an avowed conservative Catholic) and given to the

government medical regulatory agency, the Therapeutic Goods Association (TGA). Subsequently, this campaign was recognised as both a successful and interesting campaign by GetUp insiders and by the media (see Khadem 2006)[1]. This was especially important to GetUp itself because of the relationship it formed with other activist groups who specialise in this issue, mainly Reproductive Choice Australia the peak umbrella group. These relationships with expert issue groups are seen to legitimise and augment the campaign with each actor playing a significant role:

> "In a sense it was the perfect partnership, we had the infrastructure and the membership base, they had the expertise and the credibility and by combining those elements we were able to produce both a high level lobbying campaign directed by them and a broad based mobilisation campaign directed by us". (Interviewee 3).

Success can also be measured by a high profile, especially through mainstream media, of an eventually successful campaign. One interviewee acknowledged what the selectivity in campaign choice and prospects for success were based on:

> "Winnable campaigns are in the media, where there is current discussion, where there's awareness of some of the issues, (then) we can really be a 'value add'. More so than necessarily raising an issue that's not in current debate and where its much more difficult" (Interviewee 1).

An example of this kind of campaign was the long but very high profile campaign to have Australian citizen David Hicks released from Guantanamo Bay, "Defend Australian Rights". GetUp's campaign was multi-faceted as seen in the types of both online and offline action pursued, listed in Table 1. Mainstream media championed the agenda setting role GetUp played in this campaign and suggested that their

1. Interestingly this is the main campaign I have been involved in as a participant. I sent an email to my local member (from the ALP) to urge him to vote yes for the right to consider RU486 by the TGA; and I sent a congratulatory email to the leader of the historically significant, cross party, all women coalition (Lyn Allison of the Democrats) that was driving the yes campaign within parliament. I have since been added to e-newsletters of both parties!

campaign was able to broaden the issue of David Hicks beyond Al Qaeda and terrorism to focus it on domestic legal issues: "This is not really about David Hicks at all; it is about justice and about the fact that our Government and the US Government have systematically denied the rights of an Australian citizen to a fair trial." (Brett Solomon GetUp Executive Director quoted in Stewart 2007). The GetUp campaign was both praised (see Stewart 2007) and denigrated (Bolt 2007) for its re-framing of David Hicks through visual imagery as a "mischievous boy".

Success of a campaign can also be understood by the sheer large numbers that are able to be mobilised within the campaign. When the information is made available there seem to be about 30,000 of the members involved in each campaign. This supports the idea promoted by the organisation that people will only become involved when it is a campaign that is important to them. Or it could mean that these 30,000 are the same people and are active on all campaigns? The campaign that has successfully mobilised the most people was the "No Child in Detention" campaign that obtained 100,000 signatories, with successful visuals of a television ad with a well know Australian actor, Jack Thompson, and used skywriting of 'Just vote no' above parliament house (Cica 2006). It was also a successful campaign as after the broad pressure the government dropped the bill to do with offshore processing of asylum seekers**,** rather than let it be defeated by the vote in the Senate**.**

There are two interesting example of failed campaigns where the GetUp leadership chose to run on issues of central importance to them but had much less resonance with the broader public, the media, politicians of both major parties and possibly even GetUp's membership itself (especially in comparison to broader and well supported issues such as workplace relations and climate change). That is, the hoped for legislative change was not achieved and to a certain degree was stymied by bipartisan neglect of the issue. These campaigns were the recent "Equal before the law" campaign for example, in a local gay and lesbian newspaper, *Sydney Star Observer*, article the executive director suggests that it was difficult to ensure internal support to run this campaign (see http://www.ssonet.com.au/display.asp?ArticleID=6713) and the difficulty of shifting bipartisan intransigence on gay and lesbian rights

(see Schubert 2007). Their first campaign "Put communities first" about voluntary student unionism is another example of where the lack of traction of what was portrayed as a privileged students' issue stalled any success (see O'Keefe 2005).

GetUp's primary tactics are focused on using the internet to take action rather than, at this stage, creating communitarian online or offline space for forums, discussion or deliberation. Similar to other political campaigning organisations GetUp focuses largely on media work: creating advertisements for the internet and television (e.g. using the high profile Australian actor Jack Thompson for a television ad on children in detention), doing broadcast and print interviews, and funding photograph-worthy stunts (e.g. sky message over Federal Parliament on legislation on offshore processing of asylum applications). This approach exemplifies the type of "repertoire switching" described by Chadwick (2007). It also demonstrates that GetUp is probably most similar to an offline organisation such as Greenpeace that is similarly top-down in its management style and focuses on movement–oriented campaign actions, rather than on building a democratic and deliberative political space. Nevertheless, the building of online and offline political relationships, as well as their distinctive approach to campaign issues, are seen as fundamental to the organisation:

> "The online creates a network and offline provokes discussion. It's like the media in a way, the online puts issues on the agenda, and offline they are debated and discussed and people maybe are politicised. And the beauty of having a multi issue thing is even if the issue of refugees isn't the thing that activates you, it might be ABC funding, or it might be the rights at work campaign" (Interviewee 1).

Once GetUp has decided upon an issue they seek out experts in the field and gain assistance in running the campaign. Interviewee 2 described these relationships as providing intellectual capacity to the organisation and giving GetUp greater legitimacy, with organisations bringing the brand name and the expertise, and GetUp reframing the issue and creating action. Background information is provided on issues and members are advised to either write an email, letter or make a phone call to either their local MP, MPs and Senators relevant

for the particular issue, or individuals such as, recently, conservative but sometimes dissenting minor party Senators: Barnaby Joyce (of the National Party) and Steve Fielding (of Family First). There is very little prescription by GetUp of the exact content of emails so as to not appear as chain mail.

Most of the campaigns have been based on facilitating communication between MPs and their constituents, through the information aggregation capacity of websites to send emails and petitions. Where these campaigns differ from offline forms of individualised action, such as petitions, is in their sometimes disruptive, protest and large-scale orientation. For example, one interviewee characterised it as an alternative form of protest organisation that has a larger reach:

> "The number of people who participate in a rally or organise a rally is certainly different to the membership base of GetUp, which is much broader, because its got a very low threshold for participation. You don't need to know the right organisation or to have been involved in the student movement for years or have an activist identity to get involved in GetUp. You just need to have a very broad concern and probably get introduced to the organisation on the web or through the media, or through a common interest concern." (Interviewee 1).

GetUp also prioritises the internet as it provides timeliness and ease of access for doing politics rather that for creating community specific space. The interviewee quoted below emphasised that participation in the mainly online actions undertaken by GetUp provides a more time convenient and flexible alternative to being an "activist":

> "GetUp has a role in developing more flexible modes of participation that enable a broader group of people to become involved by lowering the barriers for political engagement. …in today's structure of work and life people need more flexible opportunities for political participation, not everyone wants to be an activist, but a lot of people want to be involved on a less regular and a more informal basis" (Interviewee 3).

There has been substantial mainstream media interest in the organisation and a lot of debate about its legitimacy as a political actor. GetUp has been characterised as providing a 'hi-tech political campaign' with a 'new internet lobbying tool' (Farr 2005); and also a 'highly organised and well-funded lobby group' (Dodson 2005). There have been fiery and hostile reactions from Coalition politicians (as befits disruptive movement oriented politics), and suspicion from existing progressive groups (mainly through on-line blogs, see Bahnisch 2005). For example Liberal MP Andrew Robb described their actions as 'irresponsible and it's spam' (Kelly 2005); Senator Eric Abetz stated that changes in campaigning style from emails to TV ads were an admission by GetUp that their 'spam campaign' had been 'ineffective' (Karvelas 2005). Abetz also unsuccessfully referred the organisation to the AEC to force it to disclose its donors by claiming that it was an Associated Entity of the ALP (AEC 2005).

The participatory role of members in directing the organisation toward, and the type of action taken on, specific campaigns is minimal. Interviewee 3 sees a place for more interactive online engagement, gaining member input on issue creation, and increasing a sense of involvement. In late 2006 the organisation conducted its first poll of site users to establish future campaign priorities. The poll asked the users to rate their priority level for about 15 campaigns, but climate change was overwhelmingly seen as the issue to be followed for GetUp's next major campaign and was subsequently developed. It was also the first campaign that started to try and build offline community groups by creating climate change action groups in local areas. It is too early to evaluate the success of this move to offline action for this specific campaign agenda. However, interviewee 3 also suggested that being more interactive and member-oriented must fit with the organisation's mandate. Some form of top down structure will need to remain, as GetUp does not intend to become 'another online community of interest'.

> "I think that it's an enormously useful tool and it's a powerful new medium, but I don't think the internet is going to redefine the way politics takes place in contemporary society. I think it's obviously going to become people's first source of information about politics, as

its people's first source of information about most things these days, but I don't think it's actually going to completely reform political participation in its image" (Interviewee 3).

It is clear that Chadwick's (2007) notions of organisational hybridity and selectivity in strategic repertoires are seen in GetUp's practices as they move between traditional interest group activities of lobbying parliamentarians to more disruptive practices and media work more often used by social movement organisations. It would be incorrect however to characterise GetUp as a flat, grassroots organisation. The hierarchy and decision-making structure within the organisation is central in its day to day operations. Campaign topic and strategic repertoire decisions are made among the small core of paid staff in the organisation rather than by the membership. One of Chadwick's criteria for organisational hybridity is the tendency for internet based groups to conflate the idea of supporters and members (ibid. 2007, 288; see also Mosca and Calenda & Meijer in this volume). In this reassessment members are now no longer formal, paid-up subscribers, as in traditional political forms such as parties, but can simply be those who have signed up to a particular web campaign. This is the case with GetUp in that they claim to have nearly 200,000 'members' but very few of these contribute funding to, or volunteer for, the organisation nor necessarily have a formal ongoing allegiance to it.

Referring back to the initial typology GetUp is best classified as a liberal site using the internet for both individual focussed conversation and information aggregation functions through targeted email and petition campaigns and blogging. Most other liberal sites tend to be top down e-governance initiatives that enable citizens to contact decision-makers. GetUp, however, has a broader movement orientation that is more akin to highly organised, direct action campaigns undertaken at the grassroots (similar to media savvy Greenpeace stunts). Thus we can also see a radical democracy underpinning, described by Dahlberg (2007), in trying to create a 'counter-public' that challenges the dominant discourse of conservative politics in Australia. The organisation sets up a campaign agenda and its coordinated input at a large scale is often unwelcome and disruptive, as was seen in some media and political commentary above. Its creators are wary of facili-

tating an inward looking communitarian focussed site, and are more interested in a broad based movement for change rather than online space for deliberation and consensus building.

The next section will use original survey data to unpack whether GetUp's 'counter-public' is actually mobilising citizens new to political participation and engagement.

SURVEY ANALYSIS

The survey was sent out to GetUp members using the online survey tool Survey Monkey in September 2006. Some of the questions were on future campaigns and strategies to be used by the organisation but due to confidentiality agreements are not reported here. The results reported on here, however, gives us a sense of the backgrounds of respondents and their previous experiences of political participation. There were 17,500 legitimate responses. The survey notification was sent out to all email addresses (approximately 140,000 at the time) in the GetUp member database and was available to fill in on-line for at most two weeks. This mass mail out was not ideal for achieving a representative response rate, but it can be surmised that those who filled the survey in were those who were most committed to the ideals of GetUp. Further, if the argument above is accepted, that the routinely active component of GetUp subscribers probably ranges from 30-50,000 individuals, then this is a very large and potentially representative sample size.

Only simple descriptive analysis of the results is included in this chapter. The demographics and Tables below demonstrate that the respondents are generally a distinctive, highly educated and politicised (and left wing) sub-section of the Australian population.

- 59% of the sample were women, and 36% men, 5% didn't an swer the question. In the general Australian population 51% of the population are female (ABS 2007).
- The median age of the sample is in the 35-49 age group; and the mode is 50-64. 25% of the sample is under 34; 30% aged 35-49; 33% are 50-64 and 12% are 65+. In the general Australian

population the median age is 37 (ABS 2007). This suggests that GetUp participants are older then the general population and thus the organisation is not mobilising significant numbers of young people at this stage.

- The sample is highly educated as only 10% have no post-school qualification. 76% have a diploma, bachelors or postgraduate degree from university. The Australian population has at most 29% who have a tertiary qualification (Tiffen and Gittins 2004, 118).
- Only 28% of the sample have children aged under 18 living in their household, and this probably reflects the overall older profile of the survey respondents.
- 75% of the sample was born in Australia; with a further 11% born in the UK; 64% of the respondents mothers were also born in Australia and the next largest country of birth was the UK (15%); 60% of the respondents fathers were also born in Australia and the next largest country of birth was also the UK (16%). Less than 1% of the sample was from an indigenous background. In the general Australian population 2.3% are indigenous. Similarly to the sample, 22% in the Australian population were born overseas (ABS 2007).
- The vast majority of the sample access the internet at home (86%); 50% access it at work as well; a small group (10%) have internet access at university or school. In the general population 36% of households do not have an internet connection (ABS 2007).

The members were asked about what other organisations they were a member of, as seen in Table 1 below. Overall GetUp members are more likely to have been a member of a collective group (especially environmental, charity, professional groups and political parties) than the general population. However there are several notable findings in that there is a larger proportion of the general population who are in a sporting groups and trade union membership is the same among GetUp members and the general population. Unsurprisingly, given the progressive agenda of GetUp, you will find more farmers and business organisation members in the general population than in GetUp. Overall only 22% of GetUp respondents were not members of any of these organisations; 24% were a member of just one and another

24% were a member of two organisations; the remaining 30% were a member of three or more organisations.

Table 1. Pressure group involvements

Organisation	GetUp members %	General population %
Professional	31	19
Charity	30	20
Environment	26	7
Trade union	25	25
Human rights	24	NA
Sport or recreation	20	35
Religious	12	NA
Political party	11	2
Business or employers'	5	9
Farmers	1	3

(source: Australian population figures from 2004 Australian Election Study).

The members were also asked about what types of non-GetUp based forms of participation they had engaged in over the last five years. This table shows that among GetUp members there are more or less no individuals who have not participated in any kind of political action before. This is in distinctive contrast to the general population who have had much less participatory experience in the last five years. The distinctiveness of the GetUp population is seen through their prior engagement with web-based petitioning, as in contrast only a very small section of the population has done this. The other notable differences are in protest and contacting a politician, with GetUp members much more likely to have done these in the last five years. This shows a diversity in political experience of both traditional interest group strategies lobbying, coupled with the social movement strategy of protest attendance. This prior experience of the respondents probably facilitates the "repertoire switching" an organisations such as GetUp is able to engage in.

Table 2. individualised participation experiences

Participation	GetUp members %	General population %
Signed a written petition	87	56
Signed an electronic petition	85	12
Contacted a politician	72	29
Taken part in a protest	67	14
Given regular donations	46	NA
None of the above	1	NA

(Source: Australian population figures from 2004 Australian Election Study).

The next few tables show, unsurprisingly, that GetUp as a self labelled progressive organisation attracts individuals with both a progressive party and leftwing identification. The party they identify with is either the Australian Labor Party (ALP) or the Australian Greens. The number of those with no professed party identification is very similar in the general population; and there is not a large difference in general strength of party identification either; however the general population are slightly more likely to have a very strong identification than GetUp members. Only 4% of respondents did not answer this question.

Table 3. Party identification and GetUp members

Party identification	% GetUp members	% general population
Liberal	2	42
ALP	35	32
Democrats	4	1
Greens	38	5
National	-	3
Other party	6	1
No party	15	16

Table 4. strength of party identification

Strength of Party identification	% GetUp members	% general population
Very strong	16	21
Fairly strong	46	47
Not very strong	23	32
Not applicable	15	NA

(Source: Australian population figures from 2004 Australian Election Study).

Furthermore, as shown below GetUp members are also more likely to place themselves further to the left on a left (=0)-right (=10) scale than the general population. The median point is 2, and the average is 2.6. Only 7% did not answer this question.

Table 5. left–right position

Scale:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GetUp:	9%	16%	30%	23%	9%	9%	2%	1%	1%	-	-
Oz pop:	2%	1%	4%	9%	10%	38%	9%	10%	9%	3%	5%

(Source: all general Australian population figures used for party and left-right identification are from the Australian Election Study 2004)

These survey findings contradict Chadwick's supposition that new internet organisations like GetUp (and very similar to MoveOn) are mobilising sections of the population new to participatory engagement. Instead, it seems that GetUp is a new progressive internet-based space that reinforces the existing offline practices of a progressive and highly politicised subsection of the population.

CONCLUSION

GetUp is a progressive internet based organisation that focuses on creating actions for political change. It is a largely top-down organisation that mobilises members around specific institutionally focussed campaign agendas. It does not, despite the existence of a blog, to a large extent successfully engage in the community-building, consensus

building or deliberation found on other internet sites focussed on inculcating democracy.

Characteristic to most of GetUp's campaign are six factors: they are focused on creating institutionally-based political change; they build relationships with offline NGOs; they pick campaign targets and outcomes that are seen as winnable rather than based on broader idealistic concerns; they re-frame political debate and often set the agenda on particular issues; the numbers of people they mobilise, like any protest movement, are important to seeing success; and they will use celebrity figures when appropriate to enhance their campaign action. Confirming Chadwick (2007) it is this conscious use of repertoire switching and organisational hybridity that makes GetUp novel and innovative. That is, it undertakes social movement-like mobilisations in online political spaces, prioritising new and varied technological means of information distribution and communication.

The issues GetUp campaigns on, however, are rarely specific to the online world and are connected with simultaneous offline action run by (and sometimes with) other campaign groups. Thus they are joining with these group to facilitate an activist 'counter-public' in discursive opposition to Australia's conservative political environment. GetUp does not create this space alone but in tandem with other NGOs as part of a broad progressive social movement. The survey of GetUp members also reveals that despite the claims of many commentators this type of on-line organisation does not really mobilise new participants. Instead it serves as a convenient mechanism to reinforce the involvement of middle-aged, highly educated, and experienced political participants.

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FRANCESCO MOLINARI

(e-)Participation: a complement to good legislation?

> "The centuries-old method of lawmaking by legislature requires debate and deliberation, takes opposition views into account, crafts compromises, and thus produces laws that are regarded as legitimate even by people who disagree with them. Politics did not work well when kings ruled by fiat and it does not work well when the people do the same." F. Zakaria (2003, 196).

INTRODUCTION

Though implementation of ICTs within public institutions has coincided, at first, with process restructuring and department- or service- level reorganisation, a growing awareness has gradually emerged concerning the potential value of ICTs for an increased (e-)Participation of constituencies in the political decision-making process. Requirements for this do not only include the establishment of mechanisms for the expression of a "separate judgement" by interested people (with respect to their elected representatives), but also the settlement of conditions for a timely, informed and responsible judgement, that are definitely harder to achieve. However, the potential contrast between "representative" and "participatory" democracy needs to be further clarified, in several respects:

- to set the stage for a "reasoned" juridical survey of the national legislation allowing, in each EU country, more or less advanced forms of stakeholders' involvement in the definition and evaluation of policy targets and initiatives;
- to explore the technological, social and institutional conditions enabling the current "best practices" of e-Democracy at EU level to be turned into stable components of a Participatory Legislative Process;
- to comment on the potential links between public administration performance and the participation of citizens, not just in political decision making, but in a broader effort for a better quality of life.

In recent times, most EU-25 Member States have experienced three basic trends of institutional and operational change (see EU CoR 2004):

- A (legislative and/or administrative) devolution process from central Government to the regional and local levels focusing on socio-economic imbalances and divergences between different regions of the same country, and thus on decentralised responsibility in the management of local economic and social development;
- A long wave of Public Administration reforms (e.g. Wollmann 2004), aimed at modernising or "reinventing" Government on the basis of "business-like" criteria such as quality of service and value for money, i.e. efficiency, effectiveness, and economy. This also responded to a call for greater transparency and accountability of Government bodies in the management of public resources and the fulfilment of collective interests and goals;
- The launch and piloting of projects, both centrally and at regional and local levels, for the computerisation of Public Administration, by means of a wider and more intensive use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) "as a tool to achieve better government", in line with the OECD (2003a) definition of e-Government (see OECD). This has helped to deliver efficiencies across the public sector, through the combination of ICT investment with organisational change of the back-office and the acquisition of new skills, as well as a reduction in the

cost of administrative transactions and regulatory compliance for Government "customers".

While the implementation of ICTs in public institutions had been basically related to the trends mentioned above, a growing awareness has gradually emerged concerning the potential value of ICTs for an increased (e-)Participation of constituencies in the political (decision-making) process (cf. Introduction and Lehtonen in this volume).

Incentives to democratic participation have taken the initial form of the generic provision of online information to citizens through Government's telematic portals, responding to the elementary axiom that without an increased transparency on the public administration operation, there can be no real progress towards e-Democracy (see OECD 2001). Then there have been the following: the first open and/or (un)moderated e-panels and online discussion fora, some electronic vote trials, up to the special concertative procedures connected with the drafting of new legislation or the evaluation of economic and social policies.

Trying to summarise these developments, Ann Macintosh (2004) developed a simple taxonomy to evaluate the actual "level of democratic (e-)Participation" in a political context:

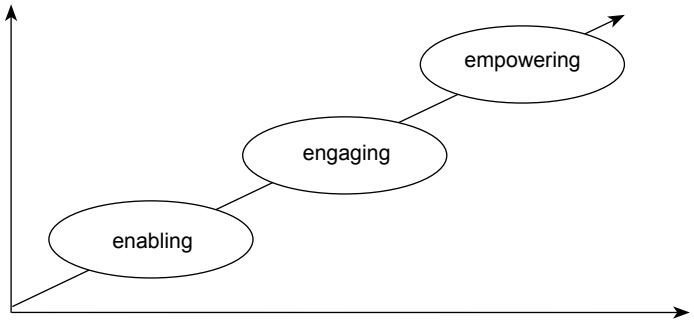

Figure 1. The evolutionary process towards e-Democracy

At the first level, technology is seen as the enabler of people's participation, in the double meaning of (Internet) accessibility and of

availability/"understandability" of the information provided by Governments to citizens.

At a higher level, ICTs can be used to involve (engage) citizens in a top-down consultation process, aiming to support legislation drafting or consensus decisions on policy issues.

Finally, citizens empowerment occurs whenever active participation and the emergence of bottom-up ideas and proposals are facilitated and allowed to influence the political decision making agenda; in our increasingly knowledge-based societies, this could also be seen as a way to stop or reverse the "dismal" tendency of people to disengage from the political process and the formal democratic (i.e. elective and representative) institutions.

In the UK, an independent inquiry by an experts' commission, published in February 2006 after 18 months of investigation conducted across the Country (see power inquiry), has put in evidence the strong contradiction between the growing popularity of charities, NGOs and other similar forms of community life and social work, on the one hand, and the falling rates of participation in political parties and democratic elections, on the other.

> "The cause is not apathy. The problem is that we don't feel we have real influence over the decisions made in our name. The need for a solution is urgent. And that solution is radical. Nothing less than a major programme of reform to give power back to the people of Britain..."

The inquiry concludes with three major recommendations that would be tantamount to shifts in current political practice, not just in the UK, but also in other democracies of the Western World:

- A rebalancing of power away from the "executive" and "unac countable" bodies towards the "elected" and "accountable" ones (i.e. Parliament and local Government);
- Introducing "greater responsiveness and choice" into the electoral and party systems;
- Allowing citizens "a much more direct and focused say" over political decisions and policies.

The underlying argument looks quite clear: disengagement is seen as the result of a perceived "ineffectiveness" of deeper personal involvement in public life.

However, we must be careful with causal relations in social sciences. Evidence about political (and civic) disengagement is confirmed by other independent sources, some of them commented on in a famous book by Robert Putnam (2000), who correlated the decline in democratic participation (elections and political parties) in the US, with a long term cultural shift from social and civic engagement to a more personal (selfish or small-groups-oriented) attitude of American individuals and households.

But clearly through this same evidence, the argument above might be reversed: because of political disengagement, "the few" and not "the many" do exercise the most successful pressure over the political agenda, making the marginal contribution from a single willing person totally ineffective.

As an example, a negative correlation has been detected by some scholars – like J. T. Hamilton (1995) - between the location of hazardous waste plants and the level of political engagement in local communities. Holding other factors constant, it is less likely that a plant of such a kind would be located in a neighbourhood where families own their homes and people vote in the elections, than in the case they mostly rent and rarely vote. The reason is straightforward: neither will local politicians run the risk of losing the next term by taking an unpopular decision, nor will a company decide to spend time and money on convincing an "aggressive", self-defendant local populace.

Another recent trend of modern democracies (especially from Southern Europe and the Far East, but with contaminations in the US as well) is known as plebiscitarianism or TV-based politics. Leaders emerge from the political arena and exploit the power of mass-media; they sometimes manage to get visibility and consensus, in spite of their often generic and contradictory agenda. By focusing on very narrow issues, referring to business-like decision making practices and invoking the need to "revitalise" the slow paced rituality of "old fashioned" legislatures, these plebiscitary leaders put Governments and representative democracy institutions under tight pressure with quite a solid argument: that further efforts are needed to improve the

efficiency and performance of Public Administration, as well as its "accountability" towards the citizens. However, citizenship is not a spectator sport:

> "TV-based politics is to political action as watching ER is to saving someone in distress. Just as one cannot restart a heart with one's remote control, one cannot jump-start republican citizenship without direct, face-to-face participation" (Putnam 2000, 341).

As a matter of fact, some are tempted to see electronic voting as the real challenge for enhancing people's control over policy makers. In contrast, it seems worth mentioning here the puzzling results of online voting in the state of California, as reported by Fareed Zakaria (2003). In one single year, the people of California were asked to vote electronically on more than 200 pieces of legislation, but this instead of opening up a new perspective to participatory democracy, has simply turned out in the creation of "*a jumble of laws, often contradictory, without any of the debate, deliberation, and compromise that characterize legislation*" (see Zakaria 2003, 194). In short, "*if California truly is the wave of tomorrow, then we have seen the future, and it does not work*" (ibid., 191 – Echoes of this standpoint will be bouncing back again in section 3 when I will discuss the "paradox of scale").

Can e-Democracy be the response to such complex and urgent needs? Will the use of ICTs help to reverse the trend towards disengagement and allow citizens new forms of participation in the policy making and legislative process, more or less the same way the Internet is radically changing the forms of communication and interaction between the "connected" people? Though this perspective may look very appealing, many cast doubts on it.

For instance, a well known OECD report (2003b, 9) drew the following lessons from the current experience of "online citizens' involvement" throughout Member Countries:

1. "*Technology is the enabler not the solution*": the idea of adopting ICTs as drivers of (e-) Participation can be misleading, if not paralleled by some relevant institutional change in the Public Administration(s) involved; in other words, widely used terms like

"e-consultation", "online conference" or "discussion fora", apart from the euphemistic commitments of some policy makers, do not necessarily imply that an underlying legislative framework exists to make room for goal-oriented discourses into the normative or administrative workflow, thus ensuring their potential impact on decisions.

2. "*Quantity does not mean quality*", with respect to the prior information provided online to citizens by the Government(s); in a framework of e-Participation, the quality requirement must be assessed with respect to conditions like accessibility, relevance and utility to the citizens wishing to participate in, or simply to be informed on, public policy making;
3. As a result, the main barriers to e-Democracy should be seen as "*cultural, organisational and constitutional not technological*", i.e. related to the introduction of new processes, methods and tools in the political and administrative practice, rather than the development of more innovative or tailored ICT solutions.

In this chapter, I am providing a non-technical perspective on the current, intense work being carried out by IT experts and scholars in the topics of e-Democracy. I will start discussing the theoretical meaning of the term "participation", going deep into three well known paradoxes that can arise out of a seamless application of the concept to the real practice of legislation in modern societies. Then I will make reference to an ongoing experience, namely the one of the Region of Tuscany (in Central Italy), to show an alternative pathway towards citizens' involvement that is not undermining the fundamentals of representative democracy. My current standpoint is that we should not rely too much on e-Participation as a goal in itself, rather as a policy tool, enabling an increase in the transparency and accountability of (especially local) Governments.

Finally, I will examine the potential of the Living Labs concept, an innovative approach set forth in Northern Europe, through which all stakeholders potentially involved in a product, service or application development actively participate in its implementation as a seamless by-product of their "ordinary life" activities. Recent methodology reflections conducted within public sector reform processes have led to

a growing attention on systemic change and the evaluation problems thereof. It is my intention to show here that the Living Labs paradigm can be very helpful in reviving and consolidating the underpinnings of a citizens-focused, participatory performance measurement system that is more coherent with the increasingly "networked" configuration of modern public administration and thus with the delicate equilibrium to be found between budget restrictions and quality assessment of "government reengineering processes".

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows: the next section (2) provides a "working definition" of participatory legislation and related concepts and processes. Section 3 shows what are known in literature as three paradoxes of e-Participation and, more generally, of collective action. Echoes of those paradoxes are to be found in the OECD report as well as Zakaria's analysis, but the power of my proposition is (apparently) to show in which directions these might be more easily solved. It will be shown that several potential links exist between Public Administration performance and participation of citizens, not just in political decision making, but in a broader effort for a better quality of life. In section 4 I have included a brief description of the Tuscany case while in section 5, a strong argument will be made in favour of the implementation of Living Labs into participatory contexts. Conclusions are drawn in section 6.

PARTICIPATION IN LEGISLATION

Generally speaking, a Participatory Legislative Process (henceforth: PLP) is defined as occurring whenever a public administration, either at national, regional or local level, is obliged (by an imperative norm) or committed (by voluntary mechanisms) to involve citizens' participation in the process of legislation.

Recent reflections conducted at EU level (see European Commission 2006) have clarified that the issue of participation can arise within four distinct stages of the legislative process:

1) policy formation (agenda setting and prior analysis);
2) discussion of draft legislation;
3) implementation of legislation;
4) amendments and follow-up.

At all stages, requirements for a PLP do not only include the establishment of mechanisms for the expression of a "separate judgement" by actively interested people (with respect to their elected representatives), but also the settlement of conditions for a timely, informed and responsible judgement, that are definitely harder to achieve. For instance, it is not that obvious that by allowing people to press a "yes – no" button on their remote control, as in the experience of traditional referenda, we should have fulfilled the conditions for their responsible judgement. On the other hand, "adverse selection" mechanisms, very well known to economists, would apply in the case of the submission of a lengthy and complex online questionnaire to fulfil the clarification requirements of people's ideas and preferences towards future legislation or issue management. There would be very few responses, usually provided by the most conscientious and educated, not necessarily those primarily interested in that specific question.

The evidence on e-Participation good practices collected by the EU e-Government Good Practice Framework (see http://www.epractice.eu) shows a great variety of activities – nationally, regionally and locally – which have in common a growing sense that there can be a "better way" of managing Government affairs and the relationship between citizens and Public Administration, enabled by ICTs (for some early examples see the table 1).

Table 1. European best practices in e-democracy

Country	Topic	Link
Denmark	A common platform for public debates within local, regional or national Government	http://www.danmarksdebatten.dk/sitemod/design/layouts/default/index.asp?pid=5020&ContentArea=1
Germany	Electronic proceedings of trials before the Federal Social Court	http://www.bundessozialgericht.de/
Greece	Online consultations of national citizens on EU-related topics	http://www.evote.eu2003.gr/
Latvia	A multifunction Internet portal including news and discussions groups, voting as well as public and private e-Services	http://www.ventspils.lv/
Netherlands	Experiments of combined (Internet and regular mail) polls	http://www.rijnland.net/ries
Portugal	Allowing citizens to cast their vote in any polling station of the Country	http://www.votoelectronico.pt/
Romania	Standardisation of information and communication services on Parliamentary websites	http://www.siveco.ro/
UK	A dynamic platform supporting e-petitioning to local Parliament	http://www.epetitions.scottish.parliament.uk/
UK	A wide range of traditional and innovative voting technologies	http://www.evotesheffield.com/
UK	An e-panel composed of several hundred citizens, regularly used for a range of e-consultations.	http://www.wtonpartnership.org.uk/

However, the wide variety of experiences shown here should not hide the "vicious circle" that is probably lying behind some (if not all) of them: with the due exceptions, as soon as they consist of partial trials and temporary experiments, no real, long-term impact will be produced; if we decided to turn the current "success stories" into stable practices of participatory legislation, other kinds of issue than solving the "technology viability" question would soon emerge.

To clarify the issues at stake, and as a suggestion for future, inter-disciplinary research, it would certainly be beneficial to cross-read the European best practices of e-Democracy with a juridical survey of the legislation allowing, in each Country, more or less advanced forms of stakeholders' involvement in the definition and evaluation of policy targets and initiatives.

For instance, since 1995 in France the «Barnier Law» on the topic of the environment, replaced in 2002 by Law No. 276 on «grassroots democracy» and the Decree No. 2175 on the organisation of public debates ("*débats publics*"), have established a National Commission with the specific purpose of managing huge stakeholders' consultations on new projects of public works, well before the final decision has been taken about them, i.e. at a moment where it is still possible to withdraw them. These debates are supported by basic ICT services (like dedicated websites – e.g. http://www.debatpublic-iter.org) and other forms of publicity and usually involve citizens, associations, experts, public entities, etc. in supplying the widest information and allowing the maximum extent of evaluation and approval on the general and specific characteristics of the new project.

In short, a primary issue seems to assess the compliance of the e-Participation mechanism with the current institutional settings. To what extent are Governments already set to "listen to the voice of the people?" Which parts of the legislative process would need to be amended to make room for a "clear and real" contribution of external forces to public policy making? And how could implementation of a suitable ICT infrastructure could get to this contribution the dignity of a "timely and useful" participation by informed and interested people, so as to move a step ahead towards real citizens' empowerment in the knowledge society?

The risk of "incremental decision making" (Lindblom 1959), if not "loosely coupling" with the principles of participatory democracy, can also be very significant also in the most enlightened constitutions. Take the following example:

> "Every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union. Decisions shall be taken as openly as possible and as closely as possible to the citizen"

It's art. 45-3 of the EU Draft Constitution. Should this mean (especially the first paragraph) that the Community has adopted the model of participatory democracy, or is it just a matter (especially in the second sentence) of more "transparency" and "subsidiarity" (i.e. closeness to citizens) in the decision making process? It is not my intention to undermine the highest value of these themes for an enlarged Europe's political agenda, but as we all have in mind the practice and results of some public consultations promoted by the European Commission, it is hard to share the view that they may have gone far beyond the strictest circle of the "already involved" and "more knowledgeable" stakeholders.

Of course there are good reasons to proceed in that way, one of which is to select (and thus restrict) the number and quality of the technical contributions to topics that often appear very specific and more often too complex for an ordinary person. This potential conflict between "representativeness" of public opinion and "effectiveness" (or efficiency) in the administrative process is another form taken by the "paradox of representativeness", which I will examine in the next section of this chapter.

Another crucial issue to explore is the social acceptability of a complex construction like the one that is implied by a truly effective (e-)Participation process. As long as we abandon the abstract and collective concept of "citizens" and start dealing with "individual" respondents (or contributors) to any specific consultation, a number of additional problems emerge.

First of all, are we so sure that those we want to leave the floor to are the most likely "connected" and "available" to participate? Usually, they belong to the most affluent sector of modern societies, if not also

to the most radical one (in either direction of political extremism, cf. Mosca in this volume). As a matter of fact, the seminal work of Mancur Olson (1971) has paved the way for several reflections on the incentive that small sized, issue-based groups have to act politically in the presence of a passive majority having little to lose on an individual basis from a change in the public priorities agenda. Though Olson's argument, which looks plausible at first sight, did not stand up to close technical analysis (see Oliver & Marwell 1988), can a democracy based on such practices be considered as really democratic in the end? James Madison and other American Founders warned a lot about the "tyranny of the few", blaming the so-called mischiefs of faction. This can seem a little bit strange in the current US experience, that is so dominated by the lobbying power of organised pressure groups; however, it is a well known fact from the theory of groups that while the many keep silent, the few can make enough noise as if they were, in fact, the majority.

Secondly, and almost paradoxically, widely used terms like "e-consultation", "online conference", "e-panel" or "discussion forum" do not mean that there is a methodological concept behind them that facilitates goal-oriented discourses and the provision of results potentially impacting the public policy making process. Sometimes this is nicknamed as concertation; a particular decision making process that has been very popular in recent years in several Western Europe PAs, including the European Commission itself. Through concertation, it is possible to enact and finalise a law's or group of laws' provision, by means of the reciprocal mediation of public and private interests that would certainly be conflicting, were it not for the mutual composition realised in the name of a superior purpose or entity. Curiously enough, there has been no systematic attempt until now to formalise and represent the concertation workflow by means of ICT-based solutions. A good, yet local, exception seems to be the FA.SI. (Fare Sistema) project, run by the Provincial Administration of Massa-Carrara, Italy, and I am also aware of a similar initiative in the Hamburg Region, Germany. Apart from that, the most advanced parliamentary IT systems only include dedicated Intranet servers for collection and archival of draft laws and their attachments, with demilitarised zones and possibly SSL-secured transactions. In this scenario, but also in the simpler one of

purposefully circulated draft documentation through the stakeholders involved in the concertation process, one of the challenges for ICT research is to ensure the creation of a shared workflow environment, with a navigable information and knowledge repository for organising, storing, searching for and exchanging electronic-based content, to simplify the inherent complexity of concertative interactions and to ensure a deeper comprehension of new proposals' implications by law-makers, enterprises and citizens alike.

By integrating with existing IT infrastructure and web facilities in the Public Administration, this new system should ensure improved access to citizens (front-end) and civil servants (back-end) to drafts of legislation and their supporting documentation (e.g. foresight, impact analysis, costs and benefits, etc.). Besides its content management functionalities, the new platform should allow the conducting of moderated online discourses on legislation proposals, involving policy makers, members elected, citizens, associations and other socio-economic groups. Moderated online discourses enable interactive and asynchronous communication between large numbers of participants (see Introduction in this volume). The threshold to participation is quite low: users can contribute anonymously and spontaneously, they can participate actively or as observers, they can write contributions, take part in polls, ballots and surveys or communicate with other users on a peer-to-peer basis. Furthermore, people can form coalitions by getting in touch with like-minded people effortlessly and discuss certain topics or subtopics of mutual interest. These discourses are a promising approach for different target groups and frameworks. They can be set up for a broad public debate with a high number of yet unknown, anonymous people, as well as for discussions with representatives, stakeholders or delegates. Online discourses are not dependent on known and already committed participants. They are able to cope with a higher level of fluctuation of participants like e.g. virtual working groups and at the same time are able to come to specific results. The basic idea is that the people are attracted by the ongoing discussion and their commitment to the particular community will have to develop during the course of the debate.

However, are we so confident that an ICT-based consultation or concertation system can reverse the long term slump in civic and politi-

cal participation that has been identified as "the" problem of our times? Many scholars cast doubt on this (e.g. Putnam 2000). Even the Power inquiry mentioned in the previous section could not avoid quipping: *"Disengagement is not primarily the fault of politicians – the problem is systemic not personal"*. Which means that it might not necessarily be technological either! As James Fishkin (1995) clearly stated:

> "The (real) problem of democratic reform is … how to bring people into the process under conditions where they can be engaged to think seriously and fully about public issues".

THREE PARADOXES OF PARTICIPATION: REPRESENTATIVENESS, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SCALE

Thomas P. ("Tip") O'Neill, the long time Speaker of the US House of Representatives, asked if he thought the quality of people elected to Congress over thirty years had been better of worse, after a minute's reflection replied: *"The quality is clearly better, much better. But the results are definitely worse"*. This anecdote - quoted from Zakaria (2003), 165-166 – well illustrates the apparently shared view that (e-)Participation can lead to better results in terms of "quality" of the legislation process. But what do we mean by "quality" in this case? I suppose this must have a lot to do with participation, or at least sharing of goals, views, actions and results with the more interested and informed stakeholders. That was, for instance, the opinion of the OECD (2001, 9) experts.

Experiences like the French "débat public" mentioned above and the participatory budget (or the less known collaborative urban planning) in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, are there to show us that through increasing citizen's participation one can think of substantially improving the social acceptance of fiscal policy (or spatial planning), before any final decision is made. However, in this context, a potential conflict arises between representative and participatory democracy, which I call the paradox of representativeness. Take the following definitions of (e-)Participation:

"The daily possibility to monitor and contribute to policy and decision making at all levels (local, national, European)"
(taken from http://europa.eu.int/idabc/servlets/Doc?id=24086),

and:

"New opportunities for Governments to receive feedback from, and consult with, individual citizens directly during policy making, without the mediation of elected politicians or civil society organisations"
(taken from http://www1.oecd.org/publications/e-book/4201131E.PDF).

Both the EC and OECD seem to adhere to the view that the essence of (e-)Participation lies in what is called elsewhere direct democracy, a sort of continuous and unmediated interaction between "the people" and "the policy makers". But which role is left to "the elected" in this case? And are they satisfied or not with that role? This leads me to describe what I will call the accountability paradox.

Accountability in itself is quite a tricky concept, with several different nuances, that partly overlap each other. According to Robert Behn (2001), three basic meanings are to be tracked in the ordinary life of public institutions: accountability for finances, accountability for fairness and accountability for performance. These are presented in the following table:

Table 2. Main definitions of accountability

Accountability for finances	The responsibility (or the obligation) of public officials to spend taxpayers' money wisely.
Accountability for fairness	The responsibility (or the obligation) of public officials to treat all citizens absolutely fairly.
Accountability for performance	The responsibility (not the obligation) of public officials to cover the expectations of the citizenry in the provision of public services.

A common element of the first two kinds of accountability is that they are mostly oriented to quality of the Government process, while the

third one to quality of the results. The two former are mostly dictated by the law(s), while the latter is more a political commitment, quite deprived of effective sanctions, especially towards "the appointed", with respect to "the elected", there is at least the potential risk of being "voted out of office".

Remember the first recommendation of the Power inquiry: in order to enhance participation, we should rebalance the power away from the "executive" and "unaccountable" bodies towards the "elected" and "accountable" ones (like Parliaments and local Government). Additionally, advocates of New Public Management argue that decentralisation, among other things, improves performance.

Unfortunately, as Clint Bolick (2004) observed, while the decisions that most affect the lives of people are taken locally, local Government is still largely unaccountable. Decisions referring to urban planning, trade licenses, social services, etc. are made at local level, but very few citizens know who takes these decisions or how they are taken. Yet those are the decisions that have the greatest impact on the quality of life of people, arguably more so than the issues on which politicians campaign at more or less half-decade intervals.

Still more seriously, Lydia Segal (1997) reported on corruption of public officials as "*an important, unintended consequence of political decentralization*" if coupled with increasing discretion and with decreasing oversight.

Finally, political accountability is reduced by the "networked" nature of modern Governments (outsourced functions, Public Private Partnerships, public utilities etc.) and their inherent control/coordination/concertation needs with respect to other Public Administrations, business associations, NGOs etc. that are often part of the same process of "practical" legislative implementation (e.g. Verhoest & Bouckaert 2005).

Less provocative than Bolick's and Segal's but still more widely accepted is the argument set forth by the New Public Management theorists in favour of the "accountability towards the community" concept, a sort of new kind of "political business cycle", starting with goal setting and closing with verification of results. Unfortunately, the voters hardly remember the past performance of their Governments when they go to the polls, and one has rarely seen an incumbent

Mayor losing the elections because of too wide a gap between initial ambitions and final achievements. Thus, the paradox of accountability becomes twofold: first, the concept looks more virtual than real, more "declared" than "actual"; second, it turns out to be largely ineffective in "binding" the rules of behaviour of the policy makers.

However, as some scholars have recently pointed out, the concept of accountability could also be reversed, from the civil servants to the civil society. For instance, a well performing street cleaning service also requires that citizens are careful not to throw litter in the streets (see Löffler 2002). This shifts the quality focus from Government to governance, a new concept that transcends organisational borders and goes into a multi-stakeholder environment that quite conforms to actual evidence. What seems to happen in real life is that politicians and constituents alike pay lip service to quality management initiatives, but are very concerned about quality of life issues which are only partly (if not badly) represented by the performance of a single administration. To approach these issues properly, innovative concepts and tools are needed, like social and democratic dialogue, and the extensive participation of citizens/customers in the accountability mechanism.

This leads us to the third paradox, namely the paradox of scale, quite confirmed by the evidence collected in California and already mentioned in the introduction. How far should the people be engaged, perhaps through the Internet and use of the ICTs? Fishkin (1995, 80) argues that "*a room of one million creates the conditions for rational ignorance*"; in other words, too many voices amount to noise, not to a shared public opinion. Yet an active role of citizens would be needed to engage, advice and control Governments, and to take part in a quality legislative process.

In my opinion, all the three paradoxes can be solved in the context of e-Participation. First of all, Participation should be transformed from "a political goal" to "a policy tool"; not an aim in itself, but something that is instrumental in other goals of the Public Administration, in a way that becomes compatible with the principles of representative democracy. Take the following example: art. 12 of the Porto Alegre Manifesto calls for the "democratisation" of international institutions with reference to "human, economic, social and cultural rights"; this is

much different (and more utopian) than invoking their representatives to submit to the risks and uncertainties of the electoral cycle!

On the other hand, if we don't want representative democracy to fall prey to "the mischiefs of faction", or e-Participation be limited to "the connected", "the affluent" and "the most educated", it is safe to run the risk of a very popular, "deliberative" version. This way, the paradox of scale can be reversed: (e-)Participation is promoted because it does not necessarily lead to real influence, but allows for a richer/more "noisy" debate and (perhaps) a broader fact representation. Remember the Power inquiry: engage and motivate citizens by allowing them "*a much more direct and focused say*" over political decisions and policies…

Finally, the accountability paradox, more than thirty-five years ago, Peter Drucker (1969), the famous management guru, advocated the building up of "*an independent agency … independent of pressures from the executive as well as from the legislature*" to play the role of "*performance auditor*", that is, to convert people's expectations into policy goals and to compare them to the results obtained, much in the same way as the Accounting Office, or simply the Courts, do protect and enforce the accountability for finances and accountability for fairness. The idea of an agency has not taken place so far, but modern regulation theories admit in its place the establishment of rules, procedures and standards, like quality management principles, helping to make Governments more accountable for their performance towards citizens.

In fact, according to the latest ISO (2005) guidelines, quality implementation in local Government should be preceded by a self-assessment test based on 39 "reliability" indicators. If one or more than one of those indicators show a weak performance level, this is a sign that the public entity considered is operating "*below the reliability line*". As a result, conformity to ISO 9001:2000 standards (or focus on customer satisfaction) must not be regarded as the final objective: once a local Government has achieved an acceptable level of reliability, "*it should look beyond conformance to performance*", aiming to improve its overall efficiency through the utilisation of ISO 9004:2000 and/or other excellence models.

Tuscany is the fifth largest region in Italy (22,997 sq. Km.), with a total population of 3,547,604 in 2001. Wedged deeply like a triangle in the heart of Italy, it is a transitional area between the highly industrialised North, and the principally agricultural South. It stretches over the Western side of the Apennines and includes the islands of the Tuscan archipelago. Its Northern borders are clearly defined, less evident are the Eastern ones, crossing the ridge of the Tusco-Emilian Apennines and taking in the upper Val Tiberina. Still more uncertain are the South-Eastern and Southern borders – the so-called Tuscia, now in the Lazio region – that seem justified only for historical, linguistic and generally cultural reasons.

The population of Tuscany is not uniformly distributed: high-density areas sharply contrast with others where urban density is markedly lower than the national average. Its mountain or rural areas, especially after the Second World War, have suffered a population drain towards the industrialised areas or lowlands: the provinces of Grosseto, Siena and Arezzo have been the most affected ones. Currently, the population is heavily concentrated along the Tyrrhenian coastline – the so-called "Area Vasta" – and in the lower Valdarno, from Florence to Pisa, where density is about 500 persons/sq.m and a concentration of ICT industries has given birth to the so-called "Arno Valley".

The standard of living in Tuscany is generally a little bit higher than the national average (also the unemployment rate is lower than the national average), though there are some differences among inner areas. The total population employed was 1,437,000 in 2001, of which 54,000 in the agricultural sector, 492,000 in industry and 891,000 in other activities (services). In 2001, a very significant share of the population fell under the age categories 25-44 (1,067,056) and 45–65 (945,536) years old, with an elderliness ratio of 189.8%, quite a bit higher than the national average.

The following picture – borrowed from the BISER (IST-2000-30187) Project "Benchmarking the Information Society: e-Europe Indicators for European Regions", together with the related comments – shows the performance of the Tuscan society in relation of the ICTs, and highlights a "trend in motion" towards an informed use of the

web. Respondents seem to place a lot of trust in a further increase of Internet usage; this expresses the awareness in the population of the innovative and constructive importance of this instrument.

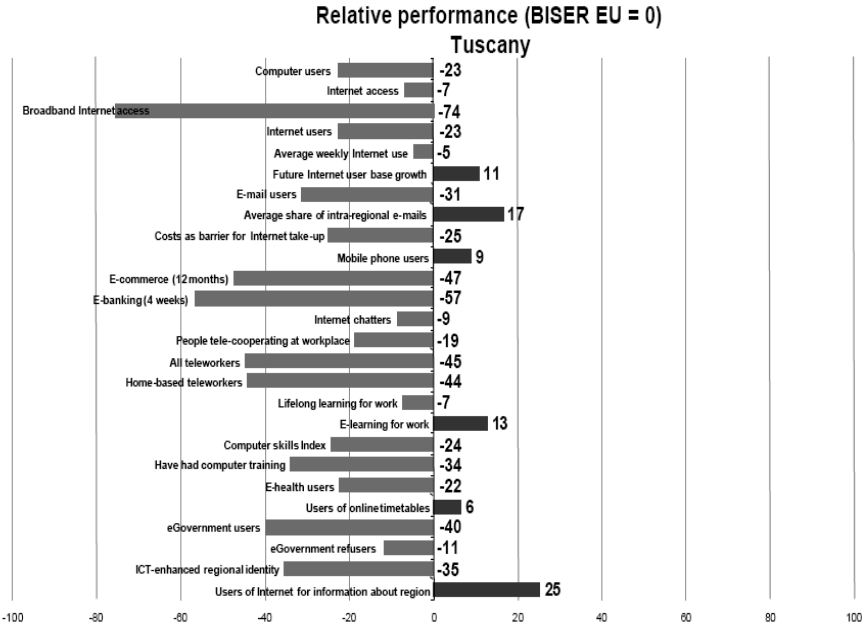

Figure 2. ICT indicators in Tuscany

The BISER average refers to 28 selected EU Regions, thus is not representative of the whole EU territory in a statistical sense. However, it has been checked that the sample is very similar to the EU average with respect to the key socio-demographic and business sector variables. Values above the EU average are found both in the attention to web services and the search for more regional information on-line: this can also be explained by the intense tourism activity, which calls for on-line sponsorship of the tour operators, so as to guarantee year round incomers.

Tuscany is, indeed, one the Italian regions which are most active in e-Government projects. Apart from the State-funded initiatives in the area of ICTs, a good share of which belongs to the Tuscan Public Administration, it is also worth mentioning here the following:

- 1995-now: building up and maintenance of a region-wide telematic infrastructure, called RTRT (first example in Italy), linking all the main public entities of Tuscany and a significant representation of the private sector (both profit and non-profit);
- 2001-now: conception and implementation of the "e-Toscana" initiative (the Action Plan of the Regional Administration), including a long list of 50 specific projects for ICT solutions development in the business area, the deployment of e-Government services and the further promotion of e-Inclusion in the Regional Information Society, with an overall investment of more that 100 million Euros
- Ongoing activities for dissemination of free and open source software and experimentation and testing of broadband and other innovative infrastructure solutions in the remote and rural areas of the Region.

Another example of public intervention in the field is the 5,7-million (euro) investment plan funded by the Regional Administration over the past three years, in order to spread 298 "PAAS" – this acronym may be translated from Italian as "Point of free-of-charge, Assisted Access to Services" – in 327 physical locations, hosted by 180 Tuscan Municipalities, in cooperation with non profit entities and voluntary associations. Each PAAS was built with a minimum financial contribution of 15 000 Euros and is now up and running at least 12 hours a week (50% of the time between 6pm-10pm, at least once per week on Saturdays or Sundays), under the supervision of an NGO's and/or Municipality's staff.

The latest statistical record available for the PAAS network (as of February 2008) is the following:

- 254 access points running (298 forecasted)
- 265 associations involved (344 registered)

- 160 municipalities involved (180 forecasted)
- 22.712 registered users (64% below 14, 4% up to 18, 8% up to 25, 14% up to 40, 8% up to 65, 2% over)
- 194.485 accesses so far (Source: Tuscany Regional Administration)

In this specific instance, public intervention was motivated by the awareness of a delay accumulated by Tuscany with respect to its "competing regions" and of the opportunities that investments in the area of ICT could create both for citizens and businesses. However, with 21st-century hardware and software installed at each PAAS, and an old tradition of meeting and teaming up in their off-duty activities, a side effect of this operation was to start looking at the Tuscan population as a potential testbed for an ICT-supported participatory legislation process.

Not surprisingly, the starting point was a proposal for institutional change. The Regional Cabinet, led by President Claudio Martini, appointed Mr. Agostino Fragai as delegated member to the reform of the political decision making and "cooperative governance system", derived from the European "Open Method of Coordination", with a specific focus on citizens' involvement in the legislative process. The political will was then to go beyond the plain concertation with Regional stakeholders and try to gain the further benefit of a longstanding "cultural" tradition of civic engagement in Tuscany.

To set the stage, in January and May 2006, two big public events were organised, to collect and discuss the international evidence on (e-)Participation in Europe and worldwide. A specific website (http://www.regione.toscana.it/partecipazione) was launched, with over 100,000 hits in the first few months. More than 50 public meetings were then held throughout the Tuscan territory, including some "focus groups" and other forms of structured interactivity. The idea was to start a collective discussion around a draft Regional law on citizens' participation – the first known example of such a kind in Europe - by using a "bottom up approach", i.e. to identify the core issues and the possible guidelines of this legislative effort, without starting from a predefined text, but rather recognising the participation experiences already on course in Tuscany.

On 18th November 2006 in Marina di Carrara, the Region held the second experience in Italy (after the City of Turin in September 2005) of an electronic Town Meeting; a participatory method allowing the involvement of large audiences, where participants carry on a simultaneous discussion in small groups, individually expressing their opinions through an electronic polling system.

In a large pavilion of one of the most important exhibition areas of Tuscany, Carrara Fiere, almost 500 people – equally representative by gender, and belonging to all social and professional groups, including immigrants, religious minorities and policy makers of the 10 provinces of the Region – were gathered for one single day throughout three different working sessions, dealing with:

1) How to improve citizens' participation in a specific public project (e.g. participatory budget, urban planning, etc.).
2) How to manage the impact of major public works on the communities involved (similar to the French *débats publics*).
3) How to get more information on public policies and create a "culture of participation" within the Tuscan polity and society.

Fifty tables were set up, each seating ten people. Every table was equipped with a laptop computer, connected to the others by means of a wireless network, and was presided over by a facilitator who conducted the discussions; each facilitator also had a remote control for voting. The discussion on each topic of the three sessions was briefly introduced by several domain experts, and supported by a Discussion Guide circulated before the meeting. The participants at each table were allowed some predefined time to discuss and send their comments to a central workstation. A main group of experts (the "Theme Team") was in charge of summarising the comments received and of sending questions back to the groups for a final vote on each of them. Much of the day's organisation was ensured by almost 100 volunteers, who not only carried out several important logistical tasks such as reception and participants' orientation, but also the delicate role of facilitators and members of the "Theme Team", thus constituting the supporting structure of the whole process of interaction.

Figure 3. Moments of Toscana's electronic Town Meeting

The activities of the electronic Town Meeting were disseminated through webcasting on a national TV channel (MTV) and to the nodes of the PAAS network mentioned above, to ensure the widest possible impact. The results of this experiment were fed into the law making agenda of the Tuscan Cabinet and Regional Council, as follows.

In March 2007, the Regional Council held a first discussion round and confirmed the validity of the work performed until then, by approving a set of recommendations to the Cabinet; this issued a first draft of the law on (e-)Participation and opened several consultations with the stakeholders of the Tuscan "cooperative governance system", including the table facilitators and the participants in the Electronic Town Meeting of November 2006. In parallel, a coordinating group was created at the Department for Public Administration of the National Government, with the presence of several Regions, to enlarge the discussion about the same topics at a multilateral level. The Regional law concerning the participation of citizens in the decision making process of Public Administration was finally passed as No. 69/2007, going into force in early 2008.

This experience of the Tuscany Region is worthwhile in two respects:

- On the one hand, it tackles the issue of participatory legislation in a "self-mirroring" way, as it started with the drafting of a participatory law on the topics, procedures and methods that can ensure further integration of citizens 'will' in the future decision making process;
- On the other hand, it provides an intelligent and measured way to integrate the citizens' "informed judgment" into the existing constitutional setup, without imposing limitations on the law making competence of elected bodies (the Regional Council and Cabinet), nor reducing the supplementary role of consultations with the economic and social stakeholders of the Region.

However, the essence of this trial, to paraphrase the title of a book by James Surowiecki (2005), is that in some cases the many can be wiser than the few. Which cases? Certainly not those where some kind of "prior selection" of the panel members has been made according to education, race, wealth or other discriminatory parameters. This would only amount to renew, in a more subtle way, the effects of Madison's "mischiefs of faction". On the contrary, the selection made by the Tuscany Region was basically on a motivation basis, integrated with prior and parallel moments of training (by means of the Discussion Guide and the role of table facilitators within the electronic Town Meeting) to allow participants a full knowledge of the "rules of the game" and their real empowerment to democratically influence – through informed judgement, consensus and voting – the nature and the quality of the following choices to be made by the Regional legislators.

THE LIVING LABS EXPERIENCE

This idea of "empowering people" to assess innovation in a highly contextualised environment echoes the Living Labs concept, an innovative approach set forth in Northern Europe, through which all stakeholders of a product, service or application actively participate in

its development process. A Living Lab is a Public-Private Partnership where firms, public authorities and people work together in creating, prototyping, validating and testing new services, businesses, markets and technologies in real-life contexts (such as cities, regions, rural areas and collaborative virtual networks between public and private players). Stakeholders can be public authorities, civic communities, SMEs and large industries, academia, content providers etc. An underlying methodology enables innovation to be created and validated in a collaborative, multi-context, real-life environment, where focus is on the person and the person is continuously monitored in all his/her social roles as (e.g.) a citizen, user, consumer or worker.

Living Labs refer to a setting that is created with specific targets and has a clear structure, but at the same time deals with the uncontrollable dynamics of daily life. Therefore, the targeted service holds an open character, not that of a usability lab, but an environment in which technology is shaped out of specific social contexts and needs and where users are seen as co-producers.

Researchers within Living Labs are restricted to monitoring what is going on from the inside. On the other hand, researchers are part of a Living Lab themselves and are able to intervene in order to contribute to a better implementation of technological innovations in social practices and deal with the unpredictable processes by reflecting on and consequently adjusting their initial methodology.

This human-centric, experience-based perspective does not only ensure a user-driven design and development of products, services or applications, but also better user acceptance. The idea here is to reach a more sustainable innovation by taking advantage of the ideas, experiences and knowledge of the people involved with respect to their daily needs, in their every day lives, encompassing all their societal roles. The real-life and everyday-life contexts both stimulate and challenge research and development, as public authorities and citizens do not only participate in, but also contribute to the whole innovation process.

As the European Commission (2005) put it, "*Innovation takes place when knowing what the market wants is brought together with knowing how to do it, in a new context*". The Living Labs concept is about moving out of laboratories into real-life contexts. This idea started at MIT Boston with William Mitchell, MediaLab and the School of

Architecture and City Planning; its early experiments spanned from the US to Singapore, from Finland to Norway, from Sweden to Germany, from the Netherlands to Denmark. In the past few years, a growing number of national experiences can be identified across Europe, and more recently, an integration effort has been set out in a pan-European perspective (see http://www.eu-livinglabs.eu).

On November 20th, 2006, the Finnish EU Presidency launched a European Network of Living Labs for the "*co-creation of innovation in public, private and civic partnership*". This is the first step towards a new European Innovation System, entailing a major paradigm shift for the whole innovation process. From a market and industrial perspective, Living Labs offer a research and innovation platform over different social and cultural systems, cross-regionally and cross-nationally. This is a natural move for ICTs, life sciences and any innovation domain that deals with human and social problem solving and people's everyday lives. However, this novel approach to research for innovation is a challenge for research methodologies, innovation process management, public-private partnership models, IPRs, open source practices, the development of new leadership and governance and financial instruments. Complexity increases remarkably with the international nature of a European Network of Living Labs, implying a set of large-scale experimentation platforms for new services, business and technology, market and industry creation within an ICT environment.

The essential feature of a Living Lab is the consideration of users' feedback and experience as an integral part of the test bed itself. European research has recognised the operational value of Living Labs methodology in 3 main areas so far:

1. Bringing laboratory based technology testbeds into real-life, user focused validation environments;
2. Developing mobility services for citizens in a real-world early adapter community with existing and close to market technologies;
3. Studying the collaborative working environments of the future from a pan-European perspective.

In all cases, the main focus has been on a user centred, context sensitive, multi-site and multi-stakeholder co-design or co-creation process, supported by mutual trust and implying the joint consideration of policy, market, societal and technological aspects with equal weight, as shown in the following picture, based on Eriksson & Nitamo & Kulkki (2005):

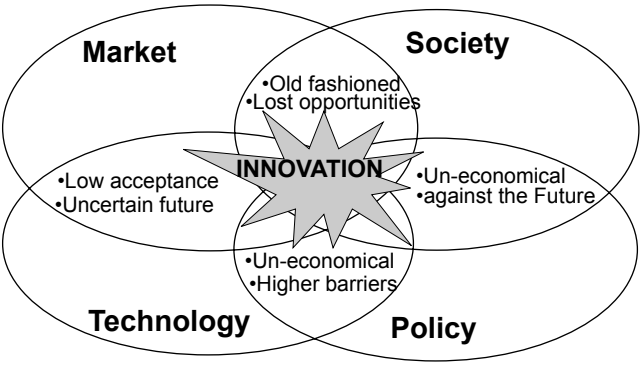

Figure 4. Human Centric Systemic Innovation Approach

The problem faced by current Living Labs is that, although similar services and products are usually developed, a coherent framework for cooperation inside a Living Lab is missing. Thus every new Living Lab has to start (almost) from scratch to develop support tools for the selected environments.

Following Jo Pierson and Bram Lievens (2005), we identified five different phases of a Living Lab trial's configuration process:

a) contextualisation, meaning a prior exploration of the technologi cal and social challenges implied by the technology or service under investigation in the trial;
b) selection, implying the identification of potential users or user groups, by means e.g. of non probabilistic or purposeful sampling;
c) concretisation, implying a thorough description of the current characteristics, everyday behaviour and perceptions of the selected test users regarding the chosen research focus;

d) implementation, meaning the behavioural validation and opera tionally running test phase of the Living Lab - from a user-oriented and ethnographic viewpoint;
e) and feedback, consisting of two main steps:
   - ❑ An ex post measurement based on the same techniques of the initial measurement, to check if there has been any evolution in the users' perception and attitude towards the introduced technology or service, to assess the changes over time in everyday life in relation to the technology use and to detect the transitions of usage over time.
   - ❑ The provision of technology recommendations from the analysis of data, gathered during the previous implementation phase.

The outcome of the feedback phase will be used as a starting point for a new research cycle ("trial") within the Living Lab; in this way, the iterative feature of this approach can be made operational.

The aim of TELL-ME, a market validation project currently ongoing under the eTEN Programme 2006 (see http://www.tellme-project.eu), is to further improve over this promising state of the art, by providing a methodology and toolset for a pan-European deployment of Living Labs in the areas of e-Government, e-Democracy and e-Services, thus creating new opportunities for networking and best practice exchange between public entities, citizens, industry and academia.

Through the replication of an operational service already established in Germany as the result of a previous FP5-IST project, DEMOS (see http://www.demos-project.org for further information), we established an Internet-based platform, supporting moderated online debates and participatory decision making at local and regional level and also the networking and repeated interaction of Living Lab participants during the development and implementation of innovative projects.

The TELL-ME methodology for pan-European Living Labs consists of the integration between:

- ❑ A five-stage implementation workflow for a successful Living Lab trial configuration, as described above;

- A three-step discussion process for consensus reaching ("the DEMOS process"), unifying three well-proven social research tools, namely the Survey technique, the Delphi approach and the Mediation method.

The functioning of this discussion process is shown in the following diagram:

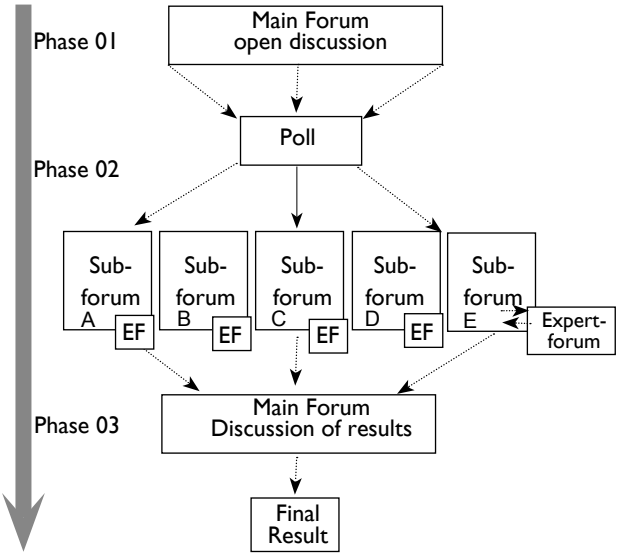

Figure 5. Outline of the TELL ME discussion process

In the first ("broadening") phase the online debate is initiated and information is gathered from as many sources as possible about the topic of discussion, the initial situation and the interests, ideas, and positions of the involved stakeholders. The TELL ME platform supports this phase with tools helping moderators cluster and structure the contributions received and visualise the relationships among them. The result of this phase is an outline and summary of the discussion thus far.

The second ("deepening") phase has the main task of addressing the issues previously selected in more depth. There, several thematic "sub-forums" of discussion are opened (their number is neither predefined not limited). The TELL ME platform supports this phase by helping participants break up into sub-groups, take part in online surveys / polls and collaborate on the formulation of joint position statements.

The task of the third and final ("consolidating") phase is to aggregate the upcoming results from the thematic sub-groups and to summarise and visualise the main points of the discussion in a final document. In certain cases, users can also grade and rank the different concepts and proposals by means of a rating mechanism in order to find the best draft solution.

This flexible framework supports the management of nearly every discourse conducted by on-line moderators. Since 2003, many different e-Participation projects have been deployed throughout Germany with as many as several thousand participants, for example in the cities of Hamburg, Munich and Freiburg. Additional trials have been performed in the regions of Thessaloniki (Greece), Massa (Italy) and Alston (UK) focusing on concrete draft pieces of legislation.

In sum, TELL ME can be thought of as a "turnkey solution" for Municipalities and other financially autonomous public entities (including private or voluntary sector organisations), willing to build up and maintain a Living Lab for involving citizens in public decision-making.

The essence of the Living Lab approach is to ensure:

- A clear focus on the process (joining on- and off-line preparation activities)
- Stakeholders commitment and involvement (especially of policy makers)
- Citizens satisfaction and sharing of results.

The finally adapted and market-validated service will be a socio-technical system for moderated and goal-oriented discourses involving citizens and political institutions as well as project developers and investors, at

national and European level. An open question is whether this system can also support:

- The migration towards (and diffusion of) more Participatory Legislative Processes, by the reduction in the complexity of their current workflow, through the application of content management and e-collaboration techniques in the preparation and discussion of legislative drafts;
- An active involvement of citizens and/or organised interest groups in the Participatory Legislative Process, by the visualisation of arguments, antecedents and potential impacts of a new law and the proposition of amendments to the existing one. This could help to fulfil the conditions for the expression of that "timely, informed and responsible judgement" by interested people (with respect to their elected representatives), that is crucial for quality decision making and a non-contradictory functioning of democratic legislatures.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I have explored the technological, social and institutional conditions enabling the transformation of the current "best practices" of e-Democracy at European level into stable components of a truly participatory legislative process.

Based on the evidence collected in the OECD and other reports, I have tried to show that the "limits of technology" are only a weak excuse for those who would rather keep the ongoing experiences of (e-)Participation in the area of simple experiments. I have also provided reasons to integrate the current list of European "best practices" in this topic area with a "reasoned" juridical survey of national legislation allowing, in each Country, more or less advanced forms of stakeholders' involvement in the definition and evaluation of policy targets and initiatives.

Moreover, three main paradoxes of collective action (namely, representativeness, accountability and scale) need to be further clarified, in

order to ensure the execution of a quality legislative process, whenever this implies an active engagement of individual citizens, besides the generic abstraction of "civil society" and through more effective forms of participation in decision making than the ordinary delegation of elected members of Parliaments and Councils.

By commenting on two current experiences in e-Democracy and e-Participation; the electronic Town Meeting of the Region of Tuscany and the pan-European Living Labs concept, I believe I have set the stage for future research on the potential links between people's empowerment, the outcome of legislation and an improved Public Administration performance, not just in political decision making, but in a broader effort for a better quality of life.

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LEHTONEN PAULIINA

Civic expression on the Net: Different faces of public engagement

INTRODUCTION

The continuously increasing use of interactive media, global publishing and user-generated content has generated much discussion on the future of journalism and roles of citizens in a contemporary society filled with new digital innovations (see Gillmor 2004; Bowman & Willis 2003; Lievrouw & Livingstone 2006). By equipping citizens with a chance to easily bring topics to public discussion without intervening mediators like journalists, the ICTs challenge traditional practices of knowledge and information production in mass media (Gillmor 2004; see also Inroduction; Jordan, Lappalainen and Baringhorst in this volume). Blogs, wikis and other diverse user-generated content on the Net witness the invasion of citizens even in global news production (e.g. McNair 2006). Recently, media houses have started to adapt this participative turn by inviting citizens to create media content with newsrooms.

The rapid changes within communication practices will also set many challenges and create potential for 'citizen-oriented media'. We can ask; what kind of role it may have in the media environment where convergence, ever growing competition and commercialisation are gaining ground? How issues in citizens' media are represented when compared to mainstream media? Or how the old question of the communicative and informative task of media is now considered? On the one hand citizen-oriented media is often produced on a small-scale

and with a low-budget and based on voluntariness. On the other hand, big news corporations have more resources to cover various themes, make more in-depth stories and attain larger audience than alternative media. But does this make journalism in big media houses more multidimensional?

In this article I approach the question of the role of citizen-oriented media by analysing civic action and its potential impacts on social learning by taking a look at a local case of grass-roots level action. The initiative of a web portal called *Manse Square*[1] serves as an example of citizens' media or citizen journalism. This local case of an alternative media was created and produced by the University of Tampere with local citizens and citizen groups in the city of Tampere[2] in Finland. In this article I discuss the civic action from two viewpoints: 1) collective civic action as social participation which might lack direct affiliation to political aims, and 2) collective action as political participation that was initiated in the Manse Square environment more rarely than communally oriented forms of participation. The article leans on research material that consists of theme interviews (taken in 2004), a web survey (in 2003–2004) and data gathered by participatory action research methods,[3] as I closely participated in the Manse Square project during 2001–2006. The interviews were conducted with and the survey implemented among the active participants of this online initiative.

The survey called forth different vantage points of the use and the role of Manse Square as a part of the local public sphere. The survey was sent to 153 citizens and 73 responded (response rate 48 %). The sample of 153 respondents was gathered by approaching people who had at that time been involved in Manse Square or participated in its actions. The number of responses is representative of the number

1. The prefix "Manse" stems from a phrase that the city of Tampere is the Manchester of Finland and it is a common nickname for Tampere. Some combining features can be found between these two towns as they both were previously industrial, working class cities. The suffix "tori" means square in English.
2. The city of Tampere with over 200 000 inhabitants is one of the biggest cities in Finland. This largest inland city in the Nordic countries has its roots in the cotton and paper mill industry which is still reflected in the cityscape, as former industrial buildings and factories appear now as examples of the regeneration process in the city centre.
3. For information concerning action research, see Stringer 1999.

of active individuals at Manse Square because this group is relatively small. The survey data was analysed with SPSS software. The small sample imposed restrictions on the analysis so mainly frequencies, a few cross tabulations, correlations and chi-square tests could be used to analyse the data.

To discuss some topics of the survey more thoroughly I did theme interviews with active citizens because I wanted to get more in-depth information about their participation experiences. I interviewed seven people who had participated in Manse Square's activities for at least one year and had lived in their current neighbourhood for some time. The interviews helped to locate the social context that exists in collective action (cf. Jankowski et al. 2001, 107).

Next I introduce the case of the Manse Square project and its background. Then I briefly discuss the relations between citizens and the media and proceed to analyse the civic action of the case and the aspects of social and political action attached to it.

THE CASE OF MANSE SQUARE – ORDINARY PEOPLE CREATING A PUBLIC SPACE

The Manse Square project was initiated in 1998 in Tampere to enhance local civic discussion and to develop new participatory tools. Manse Square (http://www.mansetori.fi, Mansetori in Finnish) has acted as both a virtual and a real life meeting place for local citizens, citizen groups and decision-makers. It has aimed at offering a free forum for alternative views on current issues, problems and interesting topics of discussion.

Currently Manse Square's portal consists of two independent websites; *Manse Communities* and *Manse Media* (see picture 1). At the *Manse Communities* section local neighbourhood communities and a cultural community of the Roma[4] maintain their community sites. As

4. The Roma are an ethnic minority group with their own specific culture and language. According to estimates there are 10 000 Roma people living currently in Finland and about 10–15 million living in Europe. Despite the long history of the Roma in Finland they still face many societal problems and prejudice. One aim of co-operation with the Roma participating in Manse Square was to develop digital communication competence and to support the empowerment process of this minority group (see Sirkkunen & Kotilainen 2004).

of May 2008 some 35 districts of Tampere have their neighbourhood sites at Manse Square.[5]

Picture 1.
The front page of Manse Square in November 2007.

Manse Media is a section for local news that relies on user generated content. Manse Media functions as a citizens' web magazine providing an alternative voice with stories produced by local "neighbourhood correspondents" as citizen reporters (see picture 2). These volunteer reporters are local people who are interested in reporting publicly about activities in their neighbourhoods.

Picture 2.
The Front page of the *Manse Media* section in September 2006 introducing a story of "the Olympics of Children".

5. There are approximately 80 districts in Tampere.

THE BACKGROUND – THE NOVELTY OF NEW MEDIA SET CHALLENGES IN 1998

The Journalism research and development centre in the University of Tampere created the portal of Manse Square in research projects[6]. The aims of the projects focused on creating and maintaining a space for civic publicness, developing social innovations and communications technology and studying the processes of the emerged public action (Sirkkunen & Kotilainen 2004).

In 1998 when the project started, the information society was not as diffused as nowadays.[7] The price of computers, software and digital cameras set limitations on civic action on a totally different scale than nowadays when digital cameras, open source technology and broadband connections are part of everyday life in many households. The novelty of the new media occurred at the beginning in several ways; for instance people did not have Internet connections at home and they had neither software nor technical skills for photo editing or web publishing.

At the beginning the project organisation borrowed digital cameras and offered office space at the university where citizens could use computers to write and publish their stories: to learn *digital competences*. They tried to overcome digital divides by educating active citizens in web publishing and encouraging people to publish stories by teaching them (see Heinonen et al. 2001). The university also provided free server space for communities' use. First the university had to encourage and invite local communities to utilise the Internet as the idea of improving communication in neighbourhoods with

6. The projects were funded primarily by the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation. The projects collaborated among others with MIT Media Lab Europe. The first project around Manse Square "Locality in the global net" was implemented in 1998–2001. The second project "Evolution of e-communities" continued the work in 2002–2004.

7. The use of ICTs has developed in Tampere since the turn of the millennium when Manse Square was initiated. For instance 80 % of the inhabitants of Tampere had an Internet connection in 2005 (Infocity research 2005). This shows an increase from 74 % in 2003 and from 65 % in 2000. In 2000 53 % of the inhabitants used the internet daily or almost daily and in 2005 this number had increased to 74 %. According to a survey that was implemented among users of Manse Square in 2004 47 % of the respondents had an ADSL connection and 19 % had a modem (Seutuverkkojen käyttäjätutkimus 2004).

ICTs was not commonly recognised earlier. This project required a lot of effort and commitment from residents but also from researchers who educated residents in using computers and methods of web publishing (ibid.).

At first there were only a few neighbourhoods that started to publish their own neighbourhood web sites at Manse Square. Step by step the portal became more popular and the number of sites increased. At the beginning Manse Square consisted of two sections; one was a neighbourhood web site - *Manse Communities* and the other was *Manse Forum*, which acted as an open arena for public debate on current and locally controversial issues. Manse Forum was divided into thematic sections that dealt with various themes such as housing, sustainable development, urban planning and general welfare. Furthermore, Manse Forum distinguished itself as an initiator of public discussion by organising encounters between citizens, civil servants and elected officials (see Hokka et al. 2004). Manse Forum was an essential part of Manse Square until 2006 when it was closed down during the transfer of maintenance and co-ordination of Manse Square from the university to the city.

The university co-ordinated Manse Square until November 2006 when the portal was transferred to the city of Tampere. The purpose of this transfer was that the Journalism research and development centre considered the city to provide better resources to secure the continuity of Manse Square.[8] By approving this task the city of Tampere wanted to emphasise the importance of the civic action originated at Manse Square. This transfer turned out to be a turning point in the portal's history.

During the university's first project the emphasis was on teaching ICT skills to citizens and inviting them to act publicly on the Net. When the second project started, the basic infrastructure of Manse Square was functioning and the researchers could focus more on developing new tools of web participation. For instance, during the second project the Manse Media section was added to the portal and the development of an open source publishing system was initiated.

8. The Journalism research and development centre functions on private funding. When Manse Square was no longer maintained as a research project of the centre after 2004, the realistic solution was to hand over the responsibility of co-ordinating Manse Square to the city of Tampere.

The years 1998–2004 were the most active period at Manse Square. During this time there were several people participating in organising meetings, seminars and encounters with local communities, civic groups, elected officials, civil servants and other interest groups. The research projects at Manse Square ended in 2004 which inevitably meant a decline in resources. During 2004–2006 there were only one part-time co-ordinator and one part-time technical administrator at Manse Square to support citizens in their activities and questions. In this period the action slowly started to decrease, partly because the research project ended and the active input from researchers ceased.

TRANSFER TO THE CITY IN 2006 BROUGHT CHANGES

During 1998–2004 regular face-to-face meetings with active citizens were held. Different sections had their own monthly group meetings and a meeting group for the whole of Manse Square assembled a few times per year. After 2004 the various detached groups were united into one meeting group of Manse Square. This group continued regular monthly meetings until Manse Square was transferred to the city of Tampere in the end of 2006. After the transfer the action has been co-ordinated by one civil servant. The density of social encounters has reduced as the city now organises meetings with Mansetori's activists only few times a year.

The change after the transfer to the city is visible not only in the diminishing number of face-to-face meetings with residents but also when viewing the use of the portal. According to user statistics only a short period after the transfer in January 2007 there were 47 312 visits to Manse Square and in December 2006 the number was 36 709. An average of 9200 users visited Manse Square monthly in 2003, compared to approximately 12 800 in 2004 (Kokkonen 2004). These figures show a positive increase. Partly the increase in user visits can be explained by the fact that the number of neighbourhood sites has increased during Manse Square's existence. Naturally this widens the scope of its users and audience.[9] However, when taking a look at

9. The present situation in April 2008 according to the user statistics shows there were 39 687 visits to Manse Square.

the number of published stories at the website, the activities show a decrease. For instance, after the transfer citizen reporters published 10 new stories at Manse Media during 12 months[10]. The current situation in May 2008 shows similar features as reporters have published only three stories this year in Manse Media. Before the transfer, for instance in August 2006 there were 11 stories written in a period of only one month. These figures show a clear decrease in the content production on Manse Square's Manse Media section.

A rough estimate of the amount of active people during the active period of Manse Square was about 70–80 persons but this group started to reduce after Manse Forum was closed and Manse Square was transferred to the city, when some of the citizen reporters continued their civic expression elsewhere. However, even if Manse Square has become more well-known, the activity of citizens shows some implications of decline.

Above I have given a brief overview of this local case of citizen media. The case of Manse Square reflects a period when ICTs were rapidly expanding in Finland and administration simultaneously had started to diversify practices of citizen participation. This progression appears clearly in the endeavours of Manse Square which were influenced by the objectives of the university's research projects. However, the core of the action was local people who created and shaped the platform to portray their view of citizen media.

To touch more upon the typical features of citizen-oriented media I briefly discuss the mutual relations between citizens and the mainstream media and the challenges ICTs have presented to the media environment. Then I continue to discuss the practices of civic action at Manse Square, mainly during the period when it was co-ordinated by the university and analyse the civic action from communal and political points of view.

RELATIONS BETWEEN CITIZENS AND THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA

The participatory development of media in which citizens are no longer just passive receivers or consumers but independent producers

10. The number of stories counted on 25th of October 2007.

who publish and share content online (Gillmor 2004) is often referred to by the terms "web 2.0" or "social media" (see Introduction in this volume). A typical example of social media are weblogs which are online postings functioning as an open space for publishing views outside mainstream media. Wikis such as Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia on the Net, are an example of online social content production that is available for everyone to edit. On the background of this development is the global trend of utilising easy-to-use web publishing tools for information and content sharing; citizens becoming active participants in the creation and dissemination of news and information (Bowman & Willis 2003).

This tendency of citizens gaining ground in media production originates partly from the aim of creating more multivoiced media which is not a new phenomenon. Various alternative media have previously tried to challenge the dominance of mainstream media and its ways of depicting citizens (e.g. Rodriguez 2001; Downing 2003). The pressures of the mass media to situate itself closer to its audience have in part derived from this activity of alternative media and the international trend of fragmenting audiences (Deuze 2006, 264). Moreover, the rapid development of communication technology has acted as an incentive for mass media to reformulate its practices. People who independently publish content on the Internet do not fit the traditional definitions of the audience or users of mass media.

Notably, the idea of public or civic journalism has emphasised relations between journalism and its audience (e.g. Rosen 2000). This reform movement has aimed at media having a role in activating people to take part in society and to produce informative journalism that could act as the basis for decisions. Placing the discussion of democratic practices and concern over the role of media in democracy (Haas & Steiner 2006; Sirianni & Friedland 2001, 231) as a starting point, civic journalism calls forth the importance of citizens' experiences when making news and stories.

Despite civic journalism's concern for the intensity of citizens' voice in mainstream media it nonetheless places people in a certain frame that journalists create. In addition, in civic journalism journalists still hold on to decisions over the form and content of published articles as well as the way people are represented in texts.

The topics and approaches of citizen produced stories differ from the texts written by journalists. It seems that the idea of what is news is not the same for citizens and journalists (e.g. Heikkilä & Lehtonen 2003). For instance in citizen produced content the threshold for published stories does not ascend to the same level as in mainstream media where elite sources such as specialists and decision-makers often get a voice. Also, in professional journalism the view on citizens is different; when citizens are considered more as readers and subscribers of newspapers, i.e. consumers. However, the situation is now changing with the participatory turn, especially in online versions of mainstream media.

The practices of mainstream media have been guided by the demands of news production and economic pressures; the most profitable stories for news rooms in an economical sense are often themes that include conflicts or scandals that sell papers instead of, for example, small and pleasant events from neighbourhoods that are important topics in the stories published by citizens in the case of this article. Furthermore, mainstream news rooms are more bound to strategies, standards and policies of media companies that set the frames; strategies to survive in the competitive world of gaining enough readers by satisfying them – producing the kind of stories readers want to read – and maintaining a certain, previously defined level of quality. I do not argue that the quality of alternative or citizens' media would be poorer than that of the mainstream media but to address the issue that citizens' media is not usually fixed by any previously determined guidelines that would affect how and for whom texts are written. On the contrary, I consider alternative media to have more freedom of action to provide multiple strains of voices and ways of expression than mainstream media.

EXPRESSIONS OF COMMUNAL ACTION AS SOCIAL LEARNING

The consumption of media is connected to public participation and civic engagement in democratic practice. Nick Couldry, Sonia Livingstone and Tim Markham (2006) call the public engagement with a notion *public connection*. With this they refer to the basic orientation towards a public world:

> […] most citizens share a basic orientation towards a public world where matters of common concern are, or should be, played out. We call that basic orientation 'public connection'. Orientation is not the same as continuous attention – everyone's attention rises and falls – but orientation underlies the possibility of attention, and without that basic orientation, there is no point improving the quality of public, including political, communication, because people will already be turned to face the other way.

People's capabilities of acting as citizens in the information society play an important part in the process of public or civic engagement. These capabilities can be called *civic competences* that are regarded as supporting the "making of good citizens" (see Dahlgren 2008). Apart from being able to understand and interpret media texts, citizens are expected to adopt, filter and communicate masses of information coming from various sources. This often long-term process, can be understood as a social learning process. Learning emerges in two-way interaction and according to Pieter Glasbergen (1997), social learning can happen when actors learn about each other during responsive communication. Learning takes place when actors are engaged in social practices and reflections in which they are able to evaluate, understand and negotiate opinions, views and shared meanings (see, Wenger 1998, 10).

I consider civic learning as social practice in a similar way to that in which Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel (2007, 4) describe new literacies: "*Literacies call us to generate and communicate meanings and to invite others to make meaning from our texts in turn*." I understand their view on new literacy as one component of social learning. By practicing digital literacies citizens can develop their civic competences (see Dahlgren 2008; Buckingham 2003) which may enhance social learning. The case of Manse Square indicates some examples of social learning through communal action.

The starting point for analysing civic action at Manse Square builds strongly on everyday life (e.g. Sirkkunen & Kotilainen 2004). According to the theme interviews I conducted, it seems that the benefits of the kind of *everyday politics* in the development of citizenship (i.e. in the process of enhancing public connection) emerge on

ordinary occasions and during current events. With everyday politics I refer to decisions, conduct and networks that act as guidelines of daily practices. It has been recognised in the studies of social capital that daily social contacts increase and support the development of horizontal civic trust and reciprocity (Putnam 1993, see also Dahlgren 2008). Daily social relations have also provided an asset in community building in the publishing neighbourhoods; the interviewees described, for instance, the importance of local associations and civic groups when organising activities.

At Manse Square the aims and starting points of participative communities have influenced the employed means of civic action. Drawing on the various research material, civic action in publishing neighbourhoods and communities has rested mainly on 1) improving the *image* of neighbourhoods and increasing their attraction, and 2) developing *internal communication*. The new technology is adopted by people to suit their specific needs and practices. At Manse Square the active citizens do not necessarily have the urge to develop civic participation practices in administration, but the emphasis is moreover on gathering positive public attention for local neighbourhoods (Sirkkunen & Kotilainen 2004, see also Hollander et al. 2002, 23). In the survey that I implemented among Manse Square activists 86 % of the respondents said they had participated in Manse Square to attempt to gain publicity for neighbourhoods.

Although Manse Square has provided general information, for instance, concerning the use of ICT in participation and offered online connections to city officials, citizens valued their own neighbourhood sites (Manse Communities) to be the most important part of the portal. 87 % of the respondents of the survey used their own neighbourhoods' sites. According to the research data local people feel neighbourhood websites and discussion boards are arenas for discussing "minor" matters like selling things on an electronic flea market, offering help to neighbours for example, in gardening, in childcare, in renovation, or trying to get a cash machine to one's neighbourhood etc. Neighbourhood discussion boards in the Manse Communities section were, therefore, much livelier than the rational and serious topics raised at the Manse Forum discussion board. See the following citizen interview extract which illustrates that the content of Manse Square was based strongly on the ideas and interests of participants:

> ...[I] think that it always resembles the people who are active there and it depends on the moment when it is done, and how active people are, and what issues become topics […] For instance people who have their own houses, they are interested in issues concerning renovation and all those kinds of things.

Within civic action at Manse Square, there can be seen to be social effects, both on the development of local communities, and individuals. For instance, Manse Square has succeeded in widening social networks and interactions among residents in communities, which can be considered as one signal of the improvement in neighbourhood communication. According to the survey respondents 90 % have established new social relations when participating in Manse Square. For instance 52 % of the respondents stated that they had become acquainted with 1–5 new persons during this action and 20 % of the respondents with 6–10 new social contacts. 60 % of these new acquaintances live in the same neighbourhood as the respondent. Some signals of the development of individuals' civic competences can be reported, such as better ICT skills and improved interaction skills (especially when contacting administration). Participation and co-operation with the administration have taught them about the practices of bureaucratic institutions. When decision-making processes and administrative practices have become more well-known and opened slightly, people have acquired relevant knowledge for their institutional expertise.

Although the citizens who participate and maintain web sites at Manse Square have been active before, expanded activeness can be reported. People have previously been more interested in issues concerning their living environment. According to the citizen interviewees they now follow more issues happening in the whole city. One cannot argue that this has happened only due to the participation at Manse Square, but probably the active participation has encouraged and strengthened individuals' public orientation:

> ...[I] believe that I follow now more actively than before everything connected to housing and living. I think that I have become much more active.

> It has increased my activity a little, although I have always been active. It is an extra tool. When you notice something, you can write a story about it. Sometimes I have written similar stories for Manse Square and for some other places such as to our neighbourhood associations' paper.

People's motives and interests in using Manse Square as an alternative media engage on individual and communal bases. Manse Square is a place where local people can learn skills for web publishing, writing stories, conducting interviews, image processing, and photographing and designing websites. Communal interests include acting on behalf of one's neighbourhood, for instance reporting on current questions, paying attention to issues that need to be developed or repaired or drawing positive attention to the neighbourhood to attract new residents. This shows in the next quote of one citizen interview:

> ...[I] have sometimes thought that when I have borrowed a camera and then when I have had the camera with me, I have thought that something could happen now so I could be right there and make a story of it.

During participation processes people have also indicated some signs of adopting a media critical perspective. Citizens have noticed the frames in which journalists often place them in interviews. See the following extract where an interviewee talks of his experiences when been interviewed by journalist:

> ...[E]ven if they [journalists] try to do a newspaper story truthfully, still it often changes a bit and ordinary people do not see that there is this kind of change or distortion.

In the interviews it occurred that the media's way of presenting citizens and city-authorities in opposite, often conflict-related positions has elicited the feeling of contradictory and difficult co-operation. This negative way of presenting the relations of city authorities and residents affects both the preconceptions that people create of decision-making and citizens' role and the possibilities of having an influence on local matters; e.g. their eagerness to participate.

Although the community context of an alternative (citizen) media is important (Jankowski & Prehn 2002), citizen-oriented media publicness is also firmly connected to an individual perspective. In the citizens' media of this article, Manse Square, individual and community views emerge in published stories. Story subjects range from the birth of kittens to the renovations of houses. The stories are based on personal experiences and this might give an impression of this website acting only as a means of individuals' self-expression. However, several stories have had a broader connection to issues and events of local neighbourhoods or the whole city.

Civic action at Manse Square could in some parts be classified as social participation with little emphasis on political action. This is partly true, but according to research data there is evidence that functioning social networks enable the formation of political civic action. The findings suggest that functioning social networks can be a prerequisite for political participation (cf. Putnam 1993; Mosca, Gillan and Vromen in this volume). The significance of trust and support from one's community may be an essential factor for developing courage for public action and justification for one's participation in public discussion. This might have even bigger emphasis in Tampere where participation in decision making processes has been considered complex and difficult (see Laine & Peltonen 2005).

I understand political civic action broadly as choices and interpretations that citizens make in their everyday lives and in processes they participate in. Political action does not necessarily relate only to party politics but can appear as choices or definitions that are made for instance in an urban planning process (see Introduction in this volume). I consider political action as a process where participants negotiate and re-negotiate decisions or definitions of questions and actively try to raise issues to the level of public discussion. The development of citizenship is partly a political process; when people participate they face different interests and values and are required to understand relations and aims that are derived from different backgrounds. In this sense the participation process can embody features of social learning. The internet has been recognised as a means for new political action and its

potential may rest in individuals' experiences; considering the Internet as a public space for experience (Lappalainen in this volume).

The expressions of political civic action at Manse Square have intertwined most clearly in topics of urban planning. One example of this was a dispute concerning a city's plan in which a vehicle bridge was planned to cross culturally-historically important scenery in the centre of Tampere. I refer to this debate as "Koskenniska bridge"[11]. Other examples of more political topics were a struggle concerning conservation of an old dye-house "Värjäämö" near the centre of Tampere and discussion over whether vast football grounds should be built on a popular recreation area. Also various smaller events connected to issues at a neighbourhood level, such as routes of bus services were ventilated.

In the case of the Koskenniska bridge active citizens clearly indicated features of political action: 1) they created web sites for the case at Manse Square's Manse Forum section, 2) they actively encouraged public discussion on the Net at discussion boards, 3) they implemented enquiries to civil servants and elected officials and published the results online and 4) they created visual illustrations of what the environment would look like after the bridge and published this material on the Net (Bamberg 2005). In this case the Internet offered a new dimension for political discussion and negotiations and challenged the traditional ways of participation.

In the Värjäämö case, Manse Square mainly served as a place for information. The sites dedicated to this old dye-house offered alternative views on planning the specific area. The sites presented alternative options and architectural drawings of the area that would preserve the dye-house as a counterpoint to the city whose plans would demolish the majority of the dye-house.

The more political topics at Manse Square have attached to issues concerning the whole city; such as culturally-historically important places around the Koskenniska bridge or the old dye-house. These have emerged as vast questions whereas smaller disputes in neighbourhoods have not succeeded in entering public discussion at the same level as the cases which included a more common interest.

11. See more Ridell 2001; 2005, and Bamberg 2005.

In the case of the Koskenniska bridge Manse Square also served as a place to illustrate spatial information in a historical perspective. It constructed a public *civic memory* by recording different stages of processes and making this information publicly available. For example, opinions of civil servants and city officials were recorded and published on the web site and then these statements were updated as the process developed (Ridell 2001; Bamberg 2005). However, creating civic memory does not necessarily require political perspective but it can also develop continuously through *everyday politics* when local neighbourhoods build and maintain their websites.

Previous examples have illustrated that political action was connected clearly to urban disputes, but Manse Square also tried to contribute to public discussion with "non-conflict" methods, by organising encounters, seminars, and discussion series and online surveys (see Hokka et al. 2004). Manse Square was for instance, one participant in organising an event on the theme of globalisation. The aim was to bring this concept to the level of everyday life; what does globalisation mean in daily practice and how can citizens approach it. By means of this event, organisers also wanted to offer an alternative view on globalisation which in mainstream media was often discussed from a very general viewpoint (ibid., 218.). Moreover, Manse Square organised, in co-operation with a local citizen group called Tampere-Forum,[12] a discussion series called "City maintained through co-operation". The goals of this debate series were 1) to test different forms of public discussion, 2) to combine different media to achieve public attention and 3) to enhance activity and co-operation at Manse Square portal (Hokka et al. 2004, 219). The topics of the series concentrated on various means of civic participation and problems experienced within participation practices as well as provided improvement suggestions.

Manse Square has acted both as 1) means and 2) a space for public discussion and political action. It has served as an arena for different topics but it has also enabled political civic participation by networking various civic actors. In these co-operative projects different actors

12. Tampere Forum is a loose citizen group that encouraged public discussion in Tampere for several years. The group consisted mainly of individual citizens but included also representatives from the city administration and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tampere. The group acted in close co-operation with Manse Square but lately it has not been active.

have encountered and shared interests and aims. In this respect one can argue that Manse Square has succeeded in encouraging political action through social and communal participation.

I think we should not set the frames of civic action too strictly. We should understand that civic activity develops through learning in different ways that not always need to be serious or rational. The stories in the Manse Media section show that public action can happen in multiple ways; for instance with cheerful and lighter means such as tales, poems, photos and pictures etc. Still, citizens do recognise the opportunity to use the media publicness of the Internet to try to have an effect on issues when necessary. This clearly indicates social learning. For instance discussions on the Manse Square website have increased when there have been disputes over urban planning in the city. Although the important role of the Tampere Forum group and the project researchers should not be forgotten; the more political endeavours required much effort from these groups who helped to arrange facilities such as meeting rooms and other necessary equipment and participated in planning the various encounters.

However, a different question is whether Manse Square has succeeded in having an effect on attitudes towards the efficiency of civic participation. The orientation of people towards citizen participation in decision making processes appears to be rather pessimistic. The citizen interviewees have often adhered to prevailing settings; the juxtaposition between residents and the city administration. The interviewees often felt that civil servants view active citizens as a burden and that it is almost impossible to have an effect on issues unless one has powerful enough resources to support one's cause:

> ...[W]ell, this is one of the eternal questions, of course they consider [your opinion] if you go and take massive enough "guns" with you and make them consider it.

> ...I think the word "have to" is pretty essential in this. (one interviewee talking about why the city organises participation; because the law obliges)

> ...If you are persistent enough, then I think you can [have an effect on issues] but usually it is pretty difficult. The best way to have an effect is to do stuff yourself, do something small and also do it the way you would like others to do it.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

At Manse Square people act as fellow-residents who follow and take care of the current errands of their neighbourhoods. They can be seen as local "messengers" and the neighbourhood websites as arenas to communicate important and topical questions to residents in the area as well as to residents of the whole city. Besides this civic interest that is connected to a really local level – to the neighbourhood – other overlapping and intertwining interests can be seen which emphasise the use of alternative media in order to focus public attention on issues that get no foothold in the mainstream media (see Gillmor 2004). In this sense people regard it as their duty to use their own channels to bring important subjects to the public arena:

> ...[I] consider it valuable that there exists at least one forum [talks about Manse Square] where alternative views on the cultural scene are registered even if they do not achieve publicness but at least they are written down somewhere.

> [When an issue is published at Manse Square] It gives more official status to this action when it is noticed somewhere, because the news media are not interested in this kind of action. It has been a tool where you have control over the issues that get publicity.

This feature of an active citizen who follows media and local happenings is also connected to the position of citizen reporter in general. Citizen reporters have some features that resemble local journalists but of course on a different scale; they do not regard Manse Square as "serious" journalism but as a lighter way of talking about the everyday life of the city compared to the mainstream media. A distinction from professional journalism is the very strong spatial connection of citizen

reporters; stories are located in their living surroundings. Stories may include historical information, tell about local tales and events such as art exhibitions, outdoor flee-markets or introduce inhabitants. Some topics have been covered both at Manse Square and in the local news media. Even then, some citizen reporters have tried to bring in a different angle to the story than the mass media. These features show the endeavours of the citizen reporters in trying to create distinguishable publicness.

Although the various civic actors at Manse Square all connect strongly to their own neighbourhoods, they share a common interest towards spatial interaction. The citizen interviewees often emphasised the importance of face to face meetings with other activists at Manse Square as a motivating factor:

> …[o]f course it is also important that you meet people. When you do things on the web it feels somehow abstract. So it feels, it is important that you belong to a group and you meet people and exchange opinions, not necessarily regarding the stories but any subjects at all.

> ...[O]f course it always motivates you when you have people around you that are active, it makes you also feel like"yes, I'm gonna finish the story now".

Due to the community driven civic action at Manse Square the gap between story producers and "audience" is not very broad. Naturally, this derives from the fact that Manse Square is a place for neighbourhood communication, but probably also the earthiness of the published stories has narrowed the distance. However, close connections between audience and producers have not been self-evident generally within alternative media (Downing 2003).

Individual engagement on civic action depends on personal motives and capabilities that citizens develop during their participation experiences; for instance capacities for critical literacy. When talking about critical literacy in the context of media education, David Buckingham addresses the fact that the aim is not purely to learn user skills or technical skills but to promote a more in-depth understanding of how media operate as well as to support more reflective ways of using

media (Buckingham 2003, 181). Although Buckingham deals with the media education of children and young people, the same principle can be used when employing research on adult learning.

CONCLUSIONS

As stated before, I consider participation and civic action as a learning or development process that can strengthen the capabilities of citizens to actively take part in society and improve their level of public orientation (see Kotilainen 2004; Heikkilä & Lehtonen 2003; Dahlgren 2008; Buckingham 2003). The case of Manse Square shows some evidence of participants practicing civic competences and digital literacies which encourages the process of social learning. However, the Internet still rarely remains as the main channel for public argument or debate for active people. Manse Square web sites act more as channels for communicating and delivering information to neighbourhood residents and to people interested in local issues. The potential of community communication and civic engagement lies in local grassroots networks. Despite growing individual interest, people may utilise their personal networks and skills in favour of a certain cause, as happened for instance in the dispute over the Koskenniska bridge in Tampere. But Manse Square has not performed generally as a place for political messages or campaigning for something.

At Manse Square the sense of belonging or the sense of spatial identity has increased among the persons and groups who have managed neighbourhood websites. Unfortunately, enabling larger spatial identity in neighbourhoods has remained unreachable. According to the citizen interviews the sense of communality has grown more because of the concrete actions taken by local actors and groups such as neighbourhood associations. Activities regarding the maintenance of websites still remain distant for the majority of residents in neighbourhoods. People are still more likely to participate in local events such as concerts, outdoor markets or other various neighbourhood events.

Like any human action citizen participation is also filled with different motives, agendas and values which have also affected the civic action at Manse Square. In mainstream media the interests of news

corporations can sometimes be rather visible, which has been argued to prevent mainstream journalism creating multi-voiced publicness (see Ridell 2005, 32). In the case of Manse Square the interests have not focused on the general principle of Manse Square in a sense that they would have set action frames for the whole of Manse Square but emerged in specific cases of civic action. Thus, certain interests were shown for example in the dispute over the Koskenniska bridge and other agendas in the discussion of changes in bus services.

In this changing media environment citizens are continuously put in the position of being citizens, consumers, customers or audiences (Livingstone 2005). As the consumer position is considered to be strengthening, citizenship can be regarded as a private affair instead of public orientation. Mojca Pajnik (2005, 355) writes about the development of citizenship in a more consumer emphasised direction so that "*it is not as much a matter of community as of the individual*". However, people can practise their citizenship in different positions. For instance people who critically observe media can be regarded as a critical audience which approaches the position of consumers. These positions of audiences or consumers are usually distinguished from the characteristics of citizens, although critical viewing can be an active and rational act. Furthermore, when people actively produce content on the Net they act as citizen producers which I believe is more generally accepted as an act of citizens because when producing new content they trigger topics for debate and in that sense participate in public discussion.

Topical issues related to free content production are questions regarding the trustworthiness and reliability of knowledge. For instance, Wikis have proved that user control over online content and its reliability can succeed even if a user community is worldwide. In Wikipedia the users' community maintains sites, traces false information and edits it. Still, recent development shows that citizens need more capabilities and means of digital literacy to evaluate media content. I wonder if mainstream media experiences a bigger responsibility in producing truthful and reliable information than citizens' media, which can be regarded as more experimental. One of the strengths of citizens' "do-it-yourself"-media is the originality of the content and layout, and the visual originality. Also, the organisational structure of citizens' media

often differs from mass media which might influence the employed means and practices. For example the case of Manse Square builds on horizontal relations that Putnam (1993, 87–91) considers typical for citizen communities in which people help, honour and trust each other. These non-hierarchical features may indicate respect for diverse and equal civic expression

One could state that when initiated in 1998 the experiment of Manse Square was a bit ahead of its time. The current period would probably be more favourable for implementing this kind of project especially in the light of technical development and diffused access to the Net. This case has depicted civic action and the use of ICTs during a certain time period and naturally the results have to be interpreted based on these circumstances. Hopefully, not only has it been a development process for citizens but for representatives of the city administration and other partners as well. Learning should not be constrained by only paying attention to changes in individual competences, but also by approaching learning from the angle that recognises the conditions, resources and social practices affecting the whole process of co-operative action.

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LAURI PALTEMAA

These bytes can bite – Chinese politics of technology and the controlled Internet

INTRODUCTION

The nearly global breakthrough of the Internet and wireless personal communication technologies at the turn of the millennium as mature and increasingly affordable consumer technologies has also created an avalanche of policy commentary and research on the possible impact of these new technologies to politics and political systems, democratic and authoritarian alike. The Internet in particular has been at the centre of this attention and in the 1990s the hopes and expectations of its emancipatory and empowering role were high. Some commentators even saw that the Internet provided people living in liberal democracies with a possibility of realising a democracy that would be more participatory in its nature than any other political system since the city states in classical Greece (Rodan 1998; see also Molinari; Lehtonen; Lappalainen; Rättilä and Introduction in this volume). Others saw that it would bring the demise of illiberal regimes worldwide (Abbott 2001, 99-100; McKedzie 1997 chapter 2; see Kalathil and Taylor 2003 with a critical reminder on making too hasty conclusions about such ends.)

The views on the emancipatory role of the new communication technologies (NCT) in authoritarian systems can be derived from the assumptions that unimpeded exchanges of views and information on politics increases people's possibility of forming a critical consciousness and oppositional organisations, even to the degree that they can

form a Habermassian "critical public sphere". (Buchstein 1997; cf. Introduction; Lappalainen; Baringhorst and Rättilä in this volume) The Internet especially, has often been regarded as a technology that is difficult to control by the authorities in this regard (Hom 2004, 1; Boyle 1998, 178). At the same time these technologies are regarded as essential for modern economic growth and development. Some scholars view that this poses authoritarian systems with a "dictator's dilemma" between the mutually exclusive aims of the need to import and apply new technology for economic development and upholding autocratic order. (McKedzie 1997; see Hachigian 2002 for a critical discussion of the view.)

However, as the information revolution has progressed and matured the anticipated swift crumbling of authoritarian regimes around the globe has not materialised even though they have embraced the NCT. Therefore, this view has came under increasing criticism (Warf & Grimes 1997, 261; George 2004; Harwit & Clark 2001, 377-382; Kalathil et al. 2003, chapter 6). According to this view, most authoritarian regimes that engage in Internet censorship, such as the People's Republic of China, North Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, and Saudi-Arabia, have been able to a varying degree, to create a controlled environment of Internet usage. Their governments may therefore be able to avoid paying the ultimate political price of regime collapse while being able to reap to a variable degree the tangible economic benefits that the NCT produce. (Hachigian 2002; Kalathil et al. 2003.)

Here we will concentrate on China, which not only has enormous size, a rising economy and political importance, but also the most sophisticated Internet control policies in the World. China therefore forms the most important contender against the emancipatory view of the NCT. Moreover, its active policies to adapt internet to authoritarian constraints form an excellent subject of study on the relationship between politics and the Internet. The same debate on the impact of the Internet on authoritarian systems has been played over also concerning China. In the one end of the spectrum of the debate many observers note that China may well prove the notions of the Internet as an emancipatory and democratising technology wrong (Goldsmith et al. 2006; Hom et al.. 2004; Shie 2004; Lagerkvist 2005, 121-122; George 2004, 520), while others maintain that her authoritarian

political system is unable to withstand the challenge the free flow of information that these technologies promise (Chang 2001, 90-93).

An intermediate view has also been offered. According to that view, with the present state of technology and controls even a controlled Internet brings opportunities for non- and even anti-Communist Party citizen groups in China, but it is also hard to predict the future course of such developments, and the road to a free and empowered civil society through the Internet is probably a long one for China. According to this view, the impact of these technologies is therefore still unclear. (Yang 2003; Chase et al., 2002.)

In this article the author employs what can be called a socially determinist, or human-centred, view of the politics of technology concerning the Internet in China. (For these labels and a discussion on the approaches they stand for in science and technology studies see Rappert (1999), Sussman (1997) and Hong (1998).) This means that the political impacts of technology are seen as results of conscious political decisions made about it by the authorities and their opponents. At least in the short and intermediate term, political initiatives and decisions, both by the government and its opposition, do explain the technological development of the Internet in China and these decisions also aim at bringing about deliberative political consequences by shaping the way the Internet is used by the Chinese. This means that studying Internet politics in China becomes studying Chinese politics of the Internet because, to a far greater extent than in the West, the technology itself is much more under political control and its configurations are more open to political decision making. If we therefore do not keep human actors in the centre of this analysis, we lose the prime movers of the development of the Internet in China from the sight. This view can be argued to be quite relevant in China, also from a historical point of view, where totalitarian and post-totalitarian governments have traditionally had a strong say in technology politics and the way people have been allowed to use and develop various technologies (Suttmeir 1989, 375-376).

The final verdict on the role of the Internet in Chinese politics is therefore, still out, and in this article the author will argue why this will probably remain so for a while in the future, too. This chapter undertakes to analyse the measures the Chinese authorities have taken

thus far in bringing the Internet under their control and countermoves taken by civil activists to undo them. What will take shape in the text is, hopefully, a picture of a contested field of the politics of technology where an authoritarian regime defends its position through attempting to adapt both Internet technology and user patterns while these policies are constantly challenged by civic activists and opposition groups. Politics and the Internet are, therefore closely interconnected in China.

THE POLITICS OF CONTROLLED INTERNET IN CHINA

In China the economic reform policies since 1979 have created tremendous economic growth that has attracted wide attention and admiration. This development has been intimately connected to the importation and adaptation of foreign technologies, including computer and communication ones. Indeed, developing modern computer technology, including networking, has become one of the manifested policy goals of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since the late 70s (Simon 1989; Baum 1989). From the beginning of the 90s this has included importing and adapting Internet technology. Since 1992, when the commercial Internet was first introduced in China, the number of net users has increased steadily from about two thousand to over 210 million at the beginning of 2008 (Internet World Stats 2008). Although high as an absolute figure, this is still only about 15 % of the population of this giant country, and is still rising steadily, making the above citation already out of date when this article is published. Such a rapid increase in Internet users means that China will emerge as the largest Internet user nation in the World some time soon.

In this situation, however, it is good to remind oneself that the introduction of the Internet to Chinese society was originally a state-led undertaking in China. In this matter China followed the Western example. After having shown increasing interest in it as early as the 80s, the CCP designated the IT sector in the economy as a strategically important sector in the beginning of the 90s and decided on a policy to actively promote the building of the required network infrastructure, increasing the number of connections available and

thereby the number of Internet users. This was done for example, through the deregulation of the markets, increasing competition of Internet service providers, investments in infrastructure, and thereby lowering the prices of using the new technologies and making them more accessible to the population, at least in urban centres. (Harwit et al. 2001, 384-391.)

These developments have contributed greatly to the situation where many Chinese, especially those in relatively privileged urban areas, have the chance and means to go online in their work or during their leisure time. However, these pro-internet policies have stopped short when it has come to liberating content production and using the Internet for political activism. The paradox of the Internet in China is therefore, that while the Party has actively promoted the availability of the Internet, the Party at the same time tries to constrain and control the free use of this technology in communication. This it does through manipulating the technology itself as well as influencing user patterns through legal and social means.

The Chinese Internet is therefore a controlled version of its Western counterpart. To achieve this the Chinese authorities employ what George (2004) terms as 'promiscuous' methods of control over Internet content and users. Promiscuity denotes the way the authorities do not limit their control of the Internet to computerised means and technologies only. Instead, additionally, the old and time-proven methods of censorship and police surveillance and repression are used. Alternatively, Chase et al. (2002) and Mulvenon term these methods as 'high tech' and 'low tech' means, where low tech means include classical means of police control and suppression including numerous regulations on the usage and allowed content of the Internet, arrests of the suspect wrongdoers, and even the physical unplugging of unwanted servers. High tech means include the closing down of unwanted websites, blocking access to them through search engines, filtering e-mails and chats and censoring them through other means as well as spearing the Party-approved contents like news through the official web pages and news sources. It also includes hacking the unwanted servers and websites abroad. (Chase et al. 2002, 49-50, 63.)

The high tech approach is embodied in the "Golden Shield" surveillance system on the Internet. As Navarria (2005, 1) defines it:

> "The system [Golden Shield] is intended to be a state-of-the-art online database combined with a unique and complex surveillance network that incorporates the whole realm of digital technology, from speech and face recognition, to credit card records, CCTV, as well as advanced internet filtering technologies."

The last refers to the so called "Great Firewall of China", which is a major part of the Golden Shield. Unlike in some other authoritarian countries, such as North Korea and Cuba, where the authorities' strategy is to try to prevent Internet access altogether from ordinary citizens (Hachigian 2002), in China the CCP has decided that the economic benefits of a controlled Internet outweigh any problems it may create. The original idea in the early 90s, however, was to create a China-wide intranet ("China World Web"), but the economic benefits of allowing exchanges between China and rest of the world via the Internet outweighed the benefits of isolation. Therefore, the authorities opted for building the Great Firewall of China that was designed to prevent citizens' entry to unwanted foreign websites. (Shie 2004, 531.)

This policy is still in force and blocking activities are directed at sites that the authorities deem subversive or otherwise objectionable. Not surprisingly, the authorities have been unable to block all "subversive" sites, but blocking has been assessed as fairly advanced and effective by international comparison. The combination of the Great Firewall and other surveillance and control technologies are considered to be the most extensive and sophisticated of their kind in the World and the authorities' ability to block politically sensitive sites has been rated relatively high in empirical tests on site (Chase et al. 2002, 66; OpenNet Initiative 2005, 1-2 and 29-34). Also the efficiency of chat room censorship has been tested as relatively high. Most of the sensitive comments on for example, democracy or the independence of Taiwan are either blocked beforehand or remain on the sites for relatively short periods of time (OpenNet Initiative 2005, 50).

Technically the Great Firewall of China has been comparatively easy to set up because the state-run companies own the main physical networks, including their backbones. Foreign companies have also lent a helping hand in constructing the needed firewall technology. For example Cisco has been reported to be the company behind the design of at least the early versions of the hardware needed for the filtering. Also individual net users can be monitored using programmes designed by foreign companies. (Shie 2004, 534-535, OpenNet Initiative 2005, 7-8.) These companies are also involved in enforcing the Internet censorship regulations, as the examples of Microsoft and Yahoo have shown. Microsoft is known to filter online conversations in its chat rooms in its Chinese servers and Yahoo! for example came under criticism in 2005 after its Hong Kong branch handed in user information to the mainland authorities on the identity of a dissident writer on the net. The writer was subsequently arrested based on this information (Amnesty International 2008, 13-14).

INFLUENCING USER PATTERNS

In China, the authorities also possess a wide variety of low tech options to suppress unwanted Internet activism. Over ten official organisations have jurisdiction over different aspects of Internet surveillance and censorship. For example, the China Publication Administration and Radio and TV Administration are responsible for supervision of Internet content, The Ministry of Information and Industry supervises operation licenses and the physical infrastructure of the Internet, the Public Security Office (*Gonganju*) is responsible for the supervision of Internet content and users. The Party's Publicity Department's Internet Bureau and the State Council's Internet Propaganda Administrative Bureau direct the propaganda and media censorship effort in Internet-Media by issuing regulations on acceptable content and also by producing it itself. In principle, both users and content providers are regulated closely. The regulations are designed to make it easy for the authorities to access all relevant user information, including their physical locations and user history. Also the surfers in numerous net cafes should register their true identities and contact information. The

cafes must also have their operation licences and unlicensed cafes face being shut down, which has occurred frequently. (OpenNet Initiative 2005, 8-10; Harwit et al. 2001, 388-389; Shie 2004, 535-536; Tao 2007, 4-6.)

As noted, there is a major commitment on the part of the authorities to supervise Internet content in China. It has been estimated that internet surveillance requires a workforce of some 30000 - 50000 persons as "cyber cops" (Hom et al. 2004, 2; the high end figure given in Hogge 2005, 1). The main principle of control is producer responsibility. That is, whoever publishes on the Internet is also legally responsible for it. These regulations cover both the users and content providers, who all must avoid producing the wrong kind of content. Also the service providers have to actively censor unwanted materials from their servers and report infringements to the authorities. Content that is classified as unwanted, and thus illegal, includes, *inter alia*, matters pertaining to state security, national unity, materials that are anti-government or threaten social stability (OpenNet Initiative 2005, 13-14), but in the Chinese censorship system censoring almost everything is in principle possible (Esarey 2006).

A part of the CCP's Internet strategy has also been to go on the offence and fill the Internet with officially approved news content (Shie 2004, 534). The principle is to deny any private gathering or editing of news from otherwise private Internet media. These must offer only officially permitted news and use only supervised sources. These regulations have also been extended to e-mails and SMS messages, which has provoked criticism from the Western press that called China the "leading Internet censor in the World". (Tao 2007; Reporters Without Borders 26.09.2005; South China Morning Post 26.09.2005; The New York Times 26.09.2005.)

On the other hand, self-censorship is rife, too. The awareness of possible surveillance, even if this would not be occurring in reality, can make one wary of going to sites deemed too sensitive or producing materials that can be deemed subversive by the authorities. Some observers actually deem this as the most effective means of all in the Chinese censor's gamut (Hachigian 2002, 48). In this, Chinese Internet surveillance also continues the long-tested tradition of self-censorship of public speech and action in China (Hom et al. 2004,

2). Censorship is also known to get tighter during certain sensitive dates or events. These include Party conferences and anniversaries of events that the Party leadership regards as not deserving of being remembered too much, such as the Fourth of June, which is the date of the 1989 Beijing massacre when the army violently cracked down on a popular mass demonstration in the capital and many other major Chinese cities (Laqerkvist 2005, 123).

HOLES IN THE NET

The combination of the means of high and low tech repression has been regarded as a relatively efficient strategy of controlling the Internet and its users in China. But no control is total and there are always holes in the net, so to speak. As noted in the introduction, the development of Internet technology is a politically contested realm in China. Groups and individuals, who want to circumvent repressive methods and use the Internet for the ends that the Party defines as subversive or unwanted, have developed various kinds of means to this end. For example the most well known opposition force in contemporary China, the Democracy Movement, uses proxy servers that can hide their identity of its webpages from the Great Firewall (Chase et al. 2002, 68-69; Navarria 2005 on various software developed specifically to this purpose), and such sites can also be accessed through various anonymising services. E-mail seems to be relatively difficult to monitor and e-mail filtering is reasonably easy to circumvent through avoiding certain keywords or, for example, altering the word slightly (OpenNet Initiative 2005, 45). However, using such methods requires some level of sophistication and can in principle be traced, which probably makes people less willing to use them (Abbott 2001, 104).

One important means of circumventing control is also to use mass e-mailing, or junk mail / spam as it is better known. The receivers of such messages can always deny that they wanted them even if this would not be the case. The messages can contain news and commentary from democracy groups, whose mailing lists can reportedly contain over one million e-mail addresses (Chase et al. 2002, 29-34 and 84). It also appears that the Chinese authorities are also not very

systematic in their e-mail filtering practises. Instead, they often resort to the low tech of physical infiltration of the activist networks in order to get information about their activities and membership. However, when an activist becomes targeted, monitoring his or her e-mail and Internet traffic may actually help the police to collect evidence against the suspect and his or her contacts (ibid., 49-50).

Even under repressive circumstances the Internet has become a means to organise protest inside China. As some well-reported cases show. As early as 1998-1999 a democracy activist group called The Chinese Democratic Party tried to set up a country-wide organisation and register with the authorities. This was conducted partly through the Internet and even after the authorities cracked down on the group, its activities continued virtually (Wright 2002). In another case, the demonstration in downtown Beijing in 1999 that triggered the crack-down against the Falun Gong sect was partly organised through e-mail. Numerous local protests in the countryside have been mobilized through SMS and e-mail (Tanner 2004, 141-142). In cities numerous student demonstrations from 1996 to the autumn 2005 anti-Japanese protests as well as the 2008 nationalist protests against Tibetan activists and their Western supporters have featured on the Internet and in campus chatrooms. It is generally noted that e-mail and chatrooms have become the basic arena of organisation and mobilisation of various NGO's, although these are predominantly not anti-Party, or even overtly political, in nature. Further means through which the Internet has been used to influence politics have been various net petitions, such as the one by the group named Tiananmen Mothers, who demand rehabilitation of their children who lost their liver in the tragic evens in 1989 (Chase et al. 2002, 10-24).

Not surprisingly, the Internet has also made it harder to control the flow of news that people find relevant and interesting. A good example was the SARS epidemic in 2003, when the Party was forced to change its policy on news blackouts when it became obvious that it could not control the flow of information, and rumours, concerning the events that had began to circulate on the Internet and through SMS. There are also examples of murder cases where the Internet has spread the news all over the country even if the authorities have wanted to cover up the cases. (Hom et al. 2004, 3.) It has also been

reported that popular opinion on the Internet has influenced some court decisions and the content of the news in the mainstream media (Lagerkvist 2005). In some cases citizens have been able to expose corrupt officials through the Internet and thus launch investigations into matters (Yang 2001, 69). Based on these signs, some observers see that the Internet makes the formation of public opinion more prominent in China (Lagerkvist 2005; Weigui 2003; Yang 2006). It is clear from these examples that total control of the Internet has been impossible to achieve even in China where the authorities have taken up the task seriously. However, at the same time the Internet is more controlled and constrained than in liberal democracies. How can we assess the importance of this phenomenon for Chinese politics?

THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONTROLLED INTERNET

A study of the Chinese Internet reveals a contested field of the politics of technology, where Internet technology is being constantly developed, spread, used, and reconfigured to serve both repressive and emancipatory ends. Furthermore, the CCP also seeks to bring Internet user patterns under its control through providing disincentives to what it deems as deviant behaviour. This means that politics of technology on and in the Internet has became one of the dimensions in the CCP's struggle to uphold its authoritarian regime, others being, for example, its strategy to co-opt the new middle classes and newly emerged NGO's in society (Dickson 2006). In all these cases the Party has allowed for more individual and independent initiatives to emerge from the nascent civil society, but acts as the ultimate referee on what kinds of activities it allows to exist in the end. In this vein it also tries to control what kind of communication technologies are developed and used as well as how they are used. However, its policies have been challenged from within and without China.

This explains how in China the Internet has both been bent to serve repressive functions and still also remains a means of increasingly free communication. If the Internet had been installed in China from the West on an "as is" basis with no state interference, it might have indeed contributed greatly in bringing down the CCP's monopoly

on power. However, this has not been the case right from the beginning, and therefore the right analytical question in China never was will the Internet cause its authoritarian political order to collapse? But rather how successfully will the Party be able to control the use the new technology? The answer for the time being is that it has been sufficiently, but not completely, successful.

Indeed, while it is easy to agree with the proposition that the Internet has not brought freedom of speech to China (Shie 2004, 539), the Internet has nevertheless made it possible for numerous protest groups and even the Democracy Movement to organise and communicate with its members and potential audiences throughout China. It is also clear that the authorities are now less capable of covering up negative national or international news and that their capacity to contain social protest has been weakened because of the wide reach of the Internet and other NCT. However, the Internet has not brought any large scale social movements with it to China, or allowed for general oppositional mobilisation.

The writer therefore agrees that the Internet poses a threat to one-Party rule in China, although this threat is not immediate. The free flow of information and communication is always dangerous to authoritarian regimes, because freedom of speech makes it possible to organise an opposition, the formation of a critical consciousness, the mobilisation of popular and foreign support, and testing of the authorities' willingness to engage in repression if needed. The Internet creates virtual "free space" (Johnston 2005, 108-110) for the latent activist networking and organisation of protest in a much more efficient way than other means of communication. In this way the Internet remains a potential threat to one-party rule in China, even if its full empowering potential has been blocked.

At the moment it seems that whether this potential will be realised depends on other factors than Internet technology itself, that is, the development of the general political environment in China. As long as there is the political will to keep up the reconfiguration of Internet technology and censorship, and no one is able to develop a cheap (or free), easy-to-use, and totally uncontrollable communication technology based on the Internet, its potential to serve as a means of free communication and organisation will not be realised. However, if media

censorship stops, which happened for instance for a short period of time in 1989, the full potential of the Internet will most probably be untapped in China too. The function of the Internet should, therefore, be assessed against the general ability of the authoritarian rule to function and keep up its repressive policies. If this ability weakens, for example due to internal strife in the Party, the easy availability of the Internet as a means of mass communication will contribute to a further weakening of the one-party system. The Internet therefore increases the potential volatility of the Chinese political system as it is, but will not bring it down on its own.

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DAVIDE CALENDA & ALBERT MEIJER

Digital encounters and 'easy' politics – Results of a web survey among young people in three European countries

INTRODUCTION

Many new aspects of politics today are concerned with long-term transformations such as the decline of political ideologies and 'big narratives', the globalisation of culture and economy and the progressive individualisation of society. These transformations together have enlarged the scope for the widespread diffusion of more narrow, customised, 'liquid' and differentiated representations of politics and forms of political participation. It has been said, for instance, that political identities develop more and more around informal and less-predictable paths, which include mundane encounters with politics, engagement in informal groups but also dispersed and multiple networks. The Internet contributes in a specific way to shape this transformation (Bennett 2000; Castells 1996; della Porta and Mosca 2005; see the discussion in Webster 2001; DiMaggio 2001; on young people see Coleman et al. 2006, Livingstone 2007, see also Introduction in this volume).

Evidence from large scale surveys and qualitative research made in recent years, led several scholars to argue that the Internet facilitates the rise and widespread diffusion of less institutional, less visible, more individualised forms of sociability and political participation (Wellman & Hampton 1999, Wellman 2001, Castells 2001). Given this context, the Internet presents a space where frequent innovative practices of information, communication and participation take place. Most of these innovations are produced by individuals and collective actors that

move and interact on selective, voluntaristic and non-deterministic bases, though their identities can be rooted in traditional political cultures. These actors own and develop self-organisation and relational capacities; the Internet contributes by giving meaning and by providing instrumental resources for the development of their actions.

Events such as the electronic disturbance actions that supported EZLN's protest in 1996 (see Castells 1997) or the massive participation in the online petition for the campaign organised by Oxfam during the G8 Conference and Live8 rally in Edinburgh (July 2005) have put in evidence the capacity of hundreds of organisations and thousands of individuals around the world to self-organise and mobilise around common targets. Probably, during these events, thousands of single individuals have experienced the meaning of becoming significant actors in the political processes around the world. The immediate returns of Internet-based participation may also facilitate the circulation of trust in this medium. Furthermore, though we don't dispose of longitudinal research, many sources seem to indicate that the integration of the Internet in everyday life may facilitate a cultural displacement of young people's political engagement (see the discussion in Loader 2007). The Internet gives an opportunity for individual development and selection of different playgrounds of political participation; by doing this, the medium can contribute to changing their political involvement (see Lappalainen; Lehtonen and Introduction in this volume).

These debates on the transitions of politics are important but need to be founded upon thorough empirical analyses of Internet practices and perceptions of politics. Many findings are based on studies of exceptional cases such as the EZLN protests or the Live8 rally. These exceptional cases provide interesting but unbalanced insights (see Baringhorst in this volume). These findings do not tell us whether these extreme cases are the forefront of general changes or whether they are outliers. To position conclusions about extreme cases in a broader perspective, a wider overview of changes in political practices and perceptions of politics is needed.

The study presented here aims to contribute to the understanding of these aspects by using material from an empirical research focused on a specific group of the population: university students. Our assumption is that the students are at the forefront of technology use

because they are young and well educated. They have integrated the Internet in their everyday lives and they use this medium as normal technology to do many things, including political practices. The following research questions have guided our research:

1. What is the impact of the Internet on the political participation of young people?
2. How does the Internet in the perception of young people change political institutions?
3. What is the impact of the Internet on the participation of young people in the public sphere?

We want to find out how extensive the political use of the Internet is and we want frame this descriptive analysis within an interpretation schema that includes data on national differences and students' trust of this new medium as a means of empowering political citizenship. Indeed, our individuals are placed in cultural and social contexts and we want to observe whether national differences exist and how these differences shape students' encounters with politics.

RESEARCH CHARACTERISTICS

In this chapter we present and discuss some findings of a large scale cross-national research project carried out in 2005. 2224 questionnaires were collected through a web questionnaire. For the analysis presented here, we decided to focus only on a homogeneous sample of young people aged between 18 and 25; thus we worked on 1865 students. Such a large data set enables us to assess the impact of the Internet on political participation and perceptions. Generalising the findings is problematic since the survey was self selected: students could choose whether they wanted to fill in the questionnaire. This may have resulted in two biases: more students with high Internet use and more students with an interest in politics. This means that we cannot generalize our findings with regard to the whole populations of students in the three countries. Comparison was one of the aims of the research and we will report these differences in other papers.

The chapter presents our overall argument and aims to enhance our understanding of online participation in general. The general trend was confirmed in all three countries.

The questionnaire was hosted on a website of the University of Florence. It was presented in four languages (Italian, Spanish, Catalan and English). There was no time to translate the questionnaire into Dutch but Dutch students are generally fluent in English (and none of the students indicated that filling in the questionnaire in English presented a problem to them). Students in Florence, Utrecht and Barcelona were asked to fill out a questionnaire and this was accessible from September to December 2005. The questionnaire was marketed through university web sites, mailing lists, paper-based information and 'word of mouth'. The access to the questionnaire was ruled through a login procedure (for Barcelona and Florence students) and through tools of IP identification (for Utrecht students). This assured that only students belonging to the three universities filled in the questionnaire.

We managed to get a good response to the questionnaire (n.2224). The response was especially high in Barcelona but Utrecht and Florence also got a fair response. We collected 276 questionnaires from Florence (12.4%); 1278 from Barcelona (57.5%) and 670 form Utrecht (30.1%). 68 per cent of the respondents are women; 79.5% are aged between 18 and 24. The study's fields of respondents: social sciences (37.6%), humanities (24.0%), engineering and computer sciences (8.5%), bio-medicine (8.1%), natural sciences, physics and mathematics (7.1%), economics (6.7%), other (8.9%); missing (1.1%).

The questionnaire touched on several social and political aspects related to the integration of the Internet in everyday life. In this paper we will focus on the questions that dealt with political participation and perceptions of politics. Our goal was to extend our knowledge about students' opinions on the role of the Internet in the democratic arena. The following questions were asked in the survey:

1. What is the impact of the Internet on political participation of young people?
   What is the impact of the Internet on the quality of your political participation?

What is the impact of the Internet on the possibility of expressing what you think?
Has the time you spend on talking about politics increased since you started using the Internet?
Do you use the Internet to talk about politics?
Have you ever expressed an opinion regarding public issues through an online survey?
Have you ever participated in a political campaign made through Internet?
Do you receive email messages with political contents?
Have you used Internet for finding information about the last European election campaign?[1]

2. How does the Internet in the perception of young people change political institutions?
How do you think the Internet will change the relation between citizens and government?
This dimension was operationalised as follows:
Recently, more and more governments provide online information and services to citizens. Do you think that this trend will reduce, not influence or increase .... the citizens' chance to control how public administration works?
the citizens' chance to condition the local government choices?
the citizens' chance to condition the National Government choices?

3. What is the impact of the Internet on participation of young people in the public sphere?
Do you use Internet to get information on public issues?
Why do you choose the Internet for finding information on public issues?
How many times do you read online newspapers, during a week?
Do you listen to the radio via Internet?
Have you ever discussed a public interest issue in a chat, blog or forum?

1. We referred to the European Elections in June 2004; in the Italian version of the questionnaire we also referred to local elections that took place in the same period; in the Spanish version we also referred to the general election that took place in March 2004.

The results were analysed for general trends and for differences between the three countries. We used a Two-Independent-Samples Test (Mann-Whitney U Test) where a dichotomous variable was crossed with an ordinal variable and the Kendall's Tau b for correlation. In the article, 'n.s' means non significant.

POLITICAL ACTIVITY ON THE INTERNET

The first set of questions referred to the way young people use the Internet for political activity. Political behaviour varies from discussing politics on the Internet to searching for online information and participating in online political campaigns. The survey showed that many students already use the Internet for different kinds of political behaviour. Using the Internet for politics has become 'normal'. A substantive group of students has actively looked for information about political parties to decide how to vote in the European election (41% rarely, 14% often). Expressing their opinion in online surveys is normal for students: only a quarter of the students have never expressed an opinion in an online survey 'regarding public issues'. Participating in a political campaign is for students not as normal as expressing their opinion in online surveys. However, this item scores high: nearly half of the students have participated in a political campaign.

How do students evaluate the impact of these uses of the Internet for political participation? The results of questions about political behaviour are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Internet impact on political activity (by percentage)

What is the impact of Internet on..?			
the quality of your political participation (n.1669)			
	decrease	*no influence*	*increase*
Italy	4.1	63.4	32.5
Spain	2.6	66.5	30.9
the Netherlands	2	55.6	42.4
the possibility of expressing what you think (n.1751)			
	decrease	*no influence*	*increase*
Italy	2.5	34.2	63.3
Spain	1.5	30.6	68
the Netherlands	3.5	50.9	45.6

The table shows that about a third of the students are positive about the impact of the Internet on political participation and a very small fraction of the students indicate that use of the Internet decreases the quality of political participation. Most students indicate that the Internet has no impact. One could explain this position by supposing that these students stress that the quality of political participation does not depend on the type of medium that is used.

The table also shows that NL students are less positive about the influence of the Internet on 'the possibility of expressing what you think' than IT and SP students. A hypothesis is that the Internet is more important for compensating for a lack of opportunities to express what students think in IT and SP than in the NL. However, a deeper exploration of this data has also led to a consideration of other factors. We observed that students living with families (this is especially the case with Italian students) score significantly higher than students living on their own or with friends and a partner (correlation score: 0.129**). The Internet is also used by these young people as a medium to increase their autonomy and develop their personal identities away from family constraints (see also Calenda 2006).

Now let us look at some of the other indicators to extend our understanding of the political use of the Internet by students. Almost 300 students (17%) reported that they have talked more about politics since they have been using the Internet. These students are interested in politics (the correlation score is 0.305**) and the Internet use reinforces their interest. Only 4% say that the time they spend talking politics since they have been using the web has decreased. No relevant national differences were found. This data suggests that the Internet reinforces political interest. The data also shows that one should not expect miracles from the Internet. The Internet does not seem to have much influence on the students who have little interest in the Internet. 132 students reported that they are not interested in politics at all (7.6%). From this group, only 3 students say that their time talking about politics has increased since they started using use of the Internet.

The results from the question about themes of political campaigns indicated that students are more interested in issues that do not directly affect their situation (human rights, solidarity, ecology) than in issues

that are directly related to their own situation (i.e. study rights). This could be interpreted as an indicator of a post-materialist orientation: civil rights, human rights, immigration, etc. (37.9%); solidarity, international cooperation, etc. (25.8%); ecology, environment, bio ethics, etc. (21.5%); social rights, work, income, pension, study rights, etc. (14.4%); Internet related issues (8.7%). This post-materialist orientation is an aspect of non-traditional politics (see Lappalainen; Baringhorst and Introduction in this volume).

In their participation, ease of use is important. Signing online petitions is relatively easy; participating in online discussion groups is more complicated. This consideration is based on findings which have emerged when we asked students to select which means they have used to participate in political campaigns: signing online petitions (38%); writing and forwarding emails to friends and colleagues (34%); online protesting forms (10%); participating in online discussion groups (6%). This data shows that politics also takes place along the lines of informal contacts (friends and colleagues). Students mostly get messages with political content from friends and colleagues. This provides evidence of 'informal politics'.

Informal networks are the main channels of political communication. This is confirmed by data related to the question 'Do you receive email messages with political content?': 41% sometimes, 11% often and 5% very often. Most of the students receive emails from friends (42%) or colleagues (34%), followed by non-party associations and organizations (12%) and parties (9%). Findings from sub questions asking about the provenance of messages, content and formats, also show interesting aspects of informal politics but also differences between countries. We used the following questions: (1) 'The content of the messages regard mainly...(political parties, political leaders, political movements - non parties).' And (2) 'Messages mostly regard… (support or criticism of political leaders, political parties or coalitions, political satire)'. Data on the content of messages reflect differences between the countries. IT students mostly receive emails about leaders, indicating the progressive personalisation of Italian politics and the presence of leaders' effect on the web (i.e. Silvio Berluscioni who was addressed by big web campaigns in recent years, see Bentivegna 2006). Italians score very low in party membership (only 4% are members or have

been members of a political party) while more are engaged in voluntary associations (18%). SP students mostly receive emails about parties, though only 5% of students are associated with political parties (they score low in all forms of membership). NL students mostly receive emails from political movements, but they are also those students that score highest in party and ecology associations. These findings seem to reflect differences in political orientations in these three countries.

The score on 'messages with political satire ' is high in IT and SP and lower in the NL and images are often more important than text. These scores may indicate a lack of trust in the political system in IT and SP. According to a Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2005 (Eurobarometer 2006), only 19% of Italians trust political parties, 27% of Spanish and 34% of the Dutch. A similar trend is observed when looking at National political institutions: Italians score lowest. Cross-national research on young people (Euyoupart 2005) confirms this trend, though Spain and Holland were not included: Italians mistrust the National political system much more than young people living in other countries – i.e. France, UK and Germany. In Italy students prefer laughing about satire to discussing issues. The level of cynicism seems higher in IT than in the other countries.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNET ON POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Participation can be meaningful but only results in effects if it influences political institutions (cf. Introduction in this volume). The second set of questions referred to young people's perceptions of changes in political institutions induced by the Internet. Does the political arena in which young people participate change through the Internet? Can young people more easily exert influence over public officials and public bodies? Is it easier to let their voices be heard? The answers to the questions concerning expected impacts of the Internet on political institutions are presented in table 2.

Table 2. The Internet's impact on citizens' control (by percentage)

Recently, more and more governments provide online information and services to citizens. Do you think that this trend will reduce, not influence or increase....			
the citizens' chance to control how public administration works? (n.1570)			
	Decrease	no influence	*increase*
Italy	2.1	32.3	65.6
Spain	4	45.2	50.8
the Netherlands	4.5	45.4	50.1
the citizens' chance to condition the local government choices? (n.1555)			
	Decrease	*no influence*	*increase*
Italy	1.1	69.4	29.6
Spain	3.7	54.8	41.5
the Netherlands	2.8	47.4	49.8
the citizens' chance to condition the National Government choices? (n.1539)			
	decrease	*no influence*	*increase*
Italy	1.1	76.3	22.6
Spain	4	64.8	31.2
the Netherlands	2.2	52.1	45.8

Most students think that the Internet will enhance the citizens' chances to control how public administration works. A substantial group of students, however, expects little effect of the Internet on public administration. IT students are more positive about this effect than the SP and Dutch students. This could reflect a wish to have more control and this reflects an offline situation with too little control. A possible explanation is that transparency and efficiency may be regarded as a bigger problem in IT than in the NL and SP. Therefore IT students find control important and hope for the opportunities the Internet offers. Another possible explanation is that the Italian public administrations have made a significant effort to improve electronic governance; in this case data can be interpreted as a sign of trust generated by innovation. We believe that both explanations can be used together to interpret this data, though the first expectation looks more consistent with the general picture provided by several studies on political efficiency and citizens' trust towards political institutions in Italy.

On average, students see a positive effect of the Internet on citizens' chances to condition local and national government choices but most students expect no influence. In these variables the situation is reversed: now the IT students are less positive than NL and SP students

are. This data may confirm the lack of trust by Italian young people towards the political systems; they feel that little power can be exercised on the political system, especially at the National level. Indeed, local government scores higher than national ones: in general, students feel that the Internet can help in conditioning political processes at the local level. The better performance of local governments could be explained by their proximity to local affairs but it can also suggest that local governments have used technology to open the participation process more than national governments have done.

These findings contrast with the scientific literature on changes in public administration. Many authors stress that the transformational nature of the electronic governance concept is often reduced to electronic administration practices (i.e. Norris 2001; De Rosa 2006). At the same time, electronic democracy experiences, promoted by institutions, are often embedded in a rigid 'institutional format', and this can hardly increase the chance of citizens becoming significant actors in the political process (see the Introduction and Lappalainen in this volume; cf. Molinari and Lehtonen in this volume). A study made by OECD (1999) on the eight most developed countries concluded that, though governments have made important efforts concerning information access and service delivery, they failed in facilitating more direct participation through the use of the Internet (see Norris 2001; for a discussion, see Barney 2004). In spite of these critical assessments, many students in the three countries are hopeful about the changes that the Internet will bring to political institutions.

The data about perceptions of the impact of the Internet on political institutions reflects the quality of political institutions of the three countries. The Netherlands is characterised by modern and quite efficient institutions; in this country we have 'long' traditions and good practices of e-governance. In Italy the lack of transparency, the predominance of bureaucratic and authoritative models of public institutions and the lack of political efficiency lead to more pessimistic views of students regarding the improvement of civic empowerment. Spain stays in the middle.

The third set of questions widens up our perspective on political participation to position it within changing practices in the public sphere. Does the Internet have an effect on how young people get information on public issues? Do they read other newspapers? These questions aim to provide an insight into changing practices in the public sphere which forms the basis for political participation.

A majority of the students (59%) use the Internet at least pretty often to get information about public issues: pretty often (40.5%) and very often (18.4%). Students were asked to indicate the reasons why they use the Internet to get information. The ease of access is the most important reason for using the Internet. The argument that the Internet offers additional information is considered important by substantial minorities. More IT students and SP students use the Internet to obtain information on public issues than Dutch students. This could either reflect a greater interest in public issues or a lack of other good sources of information about public issues. We only could check the first hypothesis: we correlated the item with the indicator of 'interest in politics' (0-3 scale) and we found a strong association (0.327**). This provides support for the hypothesis that students with a greater interest in politics use the Internet more to get information about public issues.

We analysed the answers of the students to find out what level of government they obtain information through the Internet. In their Internet use, SP students are more interested in local issues than in national issues. This is not surprising: they are probably more interested in Catalonia than in Spain. NL students show less interest in local issues. IT students are in between these two groups. A possible explanation is that mobility in the NL is higher and thus interest in local issues declines. These preferences directly reflect the preferences in the use of traditional media.

As for the relationships between media, several findings were made. The questions about specific media use for public issues shows that online newspapers are not exceptional but have – even in student populations – not yet beaten paper newspapers. A large majority read on-line newspapers at least one day per week; 20% do it two-three days

per week and 16.5% do it every day. There are no significant national differences. Reading printed newspapers is common among students: only 12% of students report that they never read newspapers; 32% do it everyday. No relevant national differences were found. A large majority states that online newspapers do not influence whether they buy newspapers. A second medium considered was Internet radio. Most students never listen to the radio via Internet. However, a substantial minority listens at least once a week. Internet radio is no longer a 'rare technology'. More students listen to national radio than to radio from other countries. The latter group, however, is substantial. And one should note that international radio is an addition to the radio stations that are normally available. This shows that a group of students becomes increasingly focused on international media.

Finally, we observed a relevant national difference on the item 'watching TV-news': consistently with other surveys (i.e. Euyoupart 2005), Italian students score very high (73% do watch TV every day), much higher than the Spanish (31.3%) and the Netherlands (53.2%). Television in Italy still represents the most important media through which people keep informed.

The use of chat rooms and blogs concerning political issues is limited. 68 % (consistent over all countries) have never accessed a chatroom or log concerning political issues. Only 5% of the students discuss public issues in a blog or chat room often or very often. The Internet seems to be more important for information and exchange communication rather than as a discursive community.

As for participation in online discussion concerning public issues, 25% of students did. Regarding the reason why they participated, the item 'to take a position on an argument' scored highest. As highlighted above, people prefer to use the Internet to confirm their preferences instead of challenging them. This is connected to the fact that friendship networks are the main channels of communication: students mainly want to communicate with people that have the same opinion.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of our survey we have presented a rich overview of emerging political practices on the Internet and changing perceptions of politics. We will conclude this paper by using the findings to answer the research questions. What have we learned about political participation on the Internet (research question 1)? Using the Internet for politics has become a normal practice for the students in all three countries. They use the Internet for a wide variety of political activities since the Internet makes participating 'easy'. The findings showed that students are positive about the impact of the Internet on political participation but also stress that the impact is limited. The Internet mostly seems to reinforce pre-existing patterns of political participation. One of the key finding was that encounters with politics are not mediated by organisations, rather, a significant role is played by informal (e)networks and groups. Informal channels form the main channels of political communication. Politics on the Internet could be qualified as 'informal politics'. Another key-finding was that politics on the Internet is mostly post-materialist politics.

We also found some interesting differences between the three countries when it comes to political participation on the Internet. A first observation was that Spanish and Italian students value the contribution of the Internet to express what they think much higher than Dutch students. This finding seems to reflect the living conditions of these students: more Italian and Spanish students live with their families and therefore value the Internet as a means to enlarge their space of autonomy. A second observation was that the political orientations of the students in the three countries vary: Italian students mainly focus on political leaders, Spanish students on political parties and Dutch students on political movements. These differences arguably reflect offline differences between the countries. A third difference was the strong focus on messages with political satire in Spain and especially Italy. This focus seems to reflect the high level of political cynicism in Italy.

What have we learned about the impact of the Internet on the perception of political institutions (research question 2)? Many students expect a positive effect of the Internet on political institutions

although most students expect no substantial effects. The positive expectations of students contrast with the scientific literature on changes in public administration that stresses that the transformational nature of the electronic governance concept is often reduced to electronic administration practices. Students are more positive about citizens' chances to control how public administration works than about their chances to condition (local and national) government choices. This difference seems to reflect the opinion that processes will be carried out differently but government choices will still basically be conditioned by the same interests.

We also found significant differences between the countries. IT students are more positive about the chance to control and condition the national government. The main explanation for this difference is that IT students find control important because of efficiency and transparency problems in Italian government and hope for the opportunities the Internet offers. In contrast, IT students are less positive than NL and SP students are about citizens' chances to condition government choices. This data seems to reflect the fact that IT students feel that little power can be exerted on the political system. These findings reflect the overall perceptions of the quality of political institutions in the three countries. Dutch political institutions are seen as modern and quite efficient institutions and the Internet only contributes to further improvement of these institutions. In Italy the perceived lack of openness and political efficiency leads to more pessimistic views of students regarding the improvement of electronic civic empowerment. Spain stays in the middle: SP students are moderately positive about the impact of the Internet on political institutions.

What have we learned about the impact of the Internet on participation in the public sphere (research question 3)? The most important finding was that, even though the Internet has not yet beaten the mass media, the use of the Internet for participation in the public sphere is 'normal behaviour'. A majority of the students uses the Internet at least pretty often to get information about public issues. They are increasingly interested in international issues. We found support for the hypothesis that students with a greater interest in politics use the Internet more to get information about public issues. The use of chatrooms and blogs concerning political issues

is limited. Additionally, only 25% of the students participated in online discussions around public issues. The Internet seems to be more important for information and exchange communication rather than as a deliberative community. Friendship networks are the main channels of communication: students mainly want to communicate about public issues with people that have the same opinion.

Again, changing behavioural patterns reflect differences in pre-existing patterns in the three countries. The reflection of pre-existing patterns is clearly highlighted by the level of student interest in the public sphere. SP students are more interested in local issues than in national issues, NL students show less interest in local issues and IT students are in between these two groups. These preferences directly reflect the preferences in the use of traditional media where SP students mainly focus on local (Catalonian) issues whereas NL students are relatively more interested in international issues.

Where do these findings take us in our search for understanding politics in a digital era? We feel that the question whether the online politics replaces offline politics Internet is not a central one. Conversely, the key aspect is the integration of political participation media. We found, for instance, that students make an integrated use of media to inform about politics. A large majority states that online newspapers do not influence whether they buy newspapers; also Internet radio is no longer a 'rare technology'.

Overall we see that national aspects sometimes shape opinions and use of the internet, especially when we look at the variables that are concerned with political institutions and the quality of the public sphere etc. However, the similarities between the countries are mostly more prominent than the differences. The Internet may play a role in this trend but should certainly not be seen as the dominant factor since there are other large trends such as globalisation, Europeanization and individualisation which have an impact on political behaviour and perceptions.

Our data confirms the hypothesis that the Internet is an extension of people's lives. The effects are not as dramatic as some of the well-known examples we mentioned in the introduction suggest. The Internet does not mobilise people who are not interested in politics; however, its use leads to encounters with politics and the public sphere

and contributes to increased expectations of young people about political changes. Students tend to trust this medium and are likely to think that it can empower people, especially against government's power. One should not expect political miracles from the Internet but it does seem to provide an important contribution to strengthening new forms of politics by making politics 'easy'.

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PART II

New styles of actionist politics on the Internet

PERTTI LAPPALAINEN

The Internet as a forum for multiple styles of political activities

INTRODUCTION

What would passive observers of the news think if they themselves could write it? What would they think if they could comment on the news at the same time as they looked at it on their computer screen? Many South Koreans, especially Oh Yeoun-ho, can answer these questions. Oh himself established an Internet publication called OhmyNews in 2000 which may change traditional journalistic practices considerably. OhmyNews is a medium whose editorial processes are open to everyone looking for new issues, is ready to write about them and to distribute their information. It had 727 editors at the beginning but there were already 35000 of them by the year 2005. However, although all the stories that are offered are not published; more than 70 per cent of the news is written by the collaborators.

Oh Yeoun-ho established the new publication because he had had enough of the one-dimensionality of the main-stream media. He had written articles in the radical marginal journals for years but his ideas were not published. His views were silenced or the traditional media stole them and took all the credit for themselves. Oh wanted to have alternatives to the communication of the conservatives which has had the dominant position. He has probably succeeded in his aims. The liberal politician Roh Moo-hyun was elected the president of South Korea in the 2002 election in spite of the wide resistance of the con-

servatives. Support of Ohmy News was regarded as a partial reason for the surprising choice. (Helsingin Sanomat 8.1.2005.)

What could parents do if the waste incineration plant located in their neighbourhood puffed so many poisons into the air that they caused a serious illness in their children? What could they do if the authorities responsible for the matter did not care about the problem at all? If the questions were addressed to Sherri and Stan Lasco living in Ohio, the answer would be obvious. Use the Internet! The Lascos found a huge amount of information about the poisonous emissions from the Internet and they received support through it from others that facilitated the battle against the company in question. Without the widespread cooperation organised with the help of the Internet the plant would probably never have been closed. The contest made the Lascos believe that the Internet is a huge resource for people needing help in everyday life. They argue that they gained courage by networking to also put pressure on local politicians. The Lascos' success in their contest inspired them to continue computer-mediated action with other activists around the world. (White 2000, ch. 5.)

These cases tell us about the power of the Internet in people's personal lives. They can raise everyday problems in public discussion with it, that is, due to the Internet people can act politically in a new way. A veteran of computer-mediated communication Edward Schwartz tells us in an interview, that he perceived years ago how powerful the online medium is: communication from many to many is the hard core of all political activity. No other technology preceding the Internet has given room for such a local, national and transnational assembling. (Schwartz 1997, 2.)

The Internet offers an opportunity for the type of subpolitical action meant by Ulrich Beck. It can strengthen such an art of self-organising characteristic to the political. Subpolitics differs from "official" politics in two ways. Firstly, the outside actors of the traditional political system are allowed onto the stage of social influencing and secondly, the significance of individuals is highlighted when they are competing for political influence (Beck 1995, 38-39). I have called this kind of a study of subpolitical action or citizens' spontaneous political action a study of micro level politics (Lappalainen 2002).

A researcher of micro politics can learn something from the micro historian. He/she should pay attention to inconsistencies, latent exceptions and irregularities instead of the regularities having become natural or unquestioned (Alapuro 1995, 317). The micro historian is interested in typical exceptions and seemingly insignificant details. This offers a new point of view for a researcher to formulate a new theory. (Peltonen 1999, 21, 26.) In political life typical exceptions are novelties or events breaking routines, that is, an exception is intensive, spontaneous *action* but not habitual, 'natural' or regulated political *behaviour*.

A new form of micro level action is net activism. Information technology has quickly spread within civil movements which is why new types of political actors, communication activists, have appeared on the political scene. They work for "better" or "alternative" use of modern information technology. A network activist interviewed by Wayne Rash refers to his own experiences and tells that "the net is a robust established mechanism for a very cheap, very fast exchange of information, broadcast, and facilitation of organisations. (…) *It is particularly useful to the voluntary groups. That is the real and honest grass-roots level activism*." (Rash 1997, 94). The Internet is very useful when grass-roots political action is constructed.

Concentrating on citizens' opportunities to utilise the Internet can be justified because the Internet is above all a forum and tool of political action of new civil movements (see Mosca; Gillan and Vromen in this volume). Political actors using the Internet must have new arts/skills because networked political activity deviates decisively from the earlier one. Due to this new phenomenon conceptions concerning the forming of social relations and definitions of political activity must be reconsidered. I am very aware of the discussion concerning the digital divide but I exclude this aspect in this chapter and analyse the issue from the perspective of a civil actor capable of utilising the Internet.

The Internet opens up opportunities for the citizens and their activities because its content can be produced by the ordinary citizens but not only by the media experts. For example, television broadcasts require expensive equipment, studios and expert knowledge (Slevin 2000, 74). It is thus productive to pay attention to the civil movements because they especially, use the new technology for the

intensification of their own activities. They consider the Internet as a free market place of ideas which is why other political actors also are very interested in it.

Newsgroups, in particular are the origins of the network communities and their activities. They are laboratories of new ideas of modes of activities. They are able to use a new electric medium in a way which gives them an advantage never seen before. Information technology provides the necessary conditions for the materialisation of innovations in practical activities – if the hidden properties included in the technology are realised (Walch 1999; Rash 1997.) Attention should be paid to the new forms and opportunities of use of the technology, that is, to the social innovations (Mattelart 2003, 157). I will try to analyse the opportunities for activity given by the new technology to the citizens but not to the dogmatists of the technology. My most important objective in this paper is to show *that the Internet is a forum enabling the citizens to act with multiple styles.*

A central objective in developing the citizen-oriented net has been to strengthen citizens' activities, like possibilities for independent publication and for self-expression. They have also developed the practice of the open and reciprocal civil discussion. In that case the citizens will be considered as the actors producing the content and participating in the public discussion and in local decision-making (Sirkkunen 2004; see also Lehtonen in this volume). Increasing the resources of the citizens with the help of the Internet is also a subject of attention in this chapter. This subject of interest is closely connected with the opportunities of innovative activities offered by the Internet.

Activities utilising the Internet are connected with the theory of reflexive modernity emphasising some essential properties of the Internet. I mean new opportunities for activity and the constant growth of the power of the actors and the individualisation of people in respect to the political structures. The basic idea of the theory is that when societies become increasingly modern, actors or subjects will have the ability to reflect on their own social existence and to change it at the same time (Beck 1995, 236).

The chapter departs with the concept of experience which I regard as a basic element of political action. After that I briefly introduce the idea of political style as a way for political actors to stand out from

other actors. Here politgenicity of action is the most essential aspect (see more closely Lappalainen 2005). After these definitions I move to *a* style of political activity the Internet enables, that is, public involvement. It is a distinct alternative to political action which is analysed in the context of the Internet. The Internet is a forum of opportunities for multiple political styles; it enables contingent action beginning anew. The last section is a summary concentrating on political activities in the Internet from the perspective of the idea of style.

POLITICAL ACTION BASED ON EXPERIENCE

Before defining the concept of style more exactly it is necessary to look at the question from which political action is constructed. In my view, intentional, intense and often spontaneous political action is based on experience. As is very well known, the idea of experience has an essential role in John Dewey's theory of action. His work *The Quest for Certainty* (originally published in 1929) is a defence of practical action and arts/skills.

Experience is based on the practical reasoning available to everyone. It is not possible to teach what experience is. Every person has the art to experience and the art to learn. It is easy to agree with Dewey's famous phrase "learning by doing". For Dewey the starting point of scientific research is experience. I would like to argue here that political action is also based on experience. It begins with the issues we experience in our environment, that is, it begins with the issues we see, deal with, use, which we enjoy and from which we suffer. Interaction between individuals and the environment is characteristic of experience. That is why people's values are inherent aspects of political life. These experiential issues are challenges of *reflective* thinking. They are questions but not answers (see also Collingwood 1939).

Experience, in particular, means the strong and phenomenal state of mind formed in the here and now. Thus experience is in a way analogous to a departure on a journey to an unknown destination, that is, to an uncertain future. (Kotkavirta 2002, 16; Niiniluoto 2002, 11). This dimension of experience is the exact meaning of political action defined by Hannah Arendt. For her, action means starting something

new, launching a process never seen before. Individual's ability to act means expecting the unexpected which is why it is always directed against certainty. When taking action, people create something which at present seems quite unlikely. Action never has an end known in advance, and thus it is not possible to predict the result of action with any certainty. By nature, action breaks all barriers (Arendt 1958, 178-190). Taking action is for Arendt an example of events characterised by breaking routine processes. Such events are miracles in a way (Arendt 1961, 168-170). Action as such, as distinct from routine behaviour following cultural conventions, is something exceptional. In my view, an intensive style and quality is a natural part of all action in the sense Arendt uses the concept.

Let us think of civil movements whose very nature is the Arendtian idea of action. That is why they have to pay attention to the style of action. In order to succeed they must stand out from the existing political actors. The formation of new action has always implied some sorts of stylistic elements. Every beginning of new political action requires an original and independent style. It is not sensible to form a new movement if its action does not stand out from the existing movements. New radical movements especially, always battle with the contemporary actors. Movements utilising the Internet have to pay attention to the stylistic dimension of action because of the enormous number of sites. They have to find original ways of using the Internet and how to construct sites standing out from the mass. Not only do the new movements have to stand out from others, but also the renewing and thus restyling political actors have to re-reflect their traditional styles.

The results of experiences are always uncertain; they cannot be known in advance. They are full of threats and they are unpleasant in nature. This kind of uncertainty often creates impatience and the will to act immediately (Dewey 1999, 195). The idea of uncertainty is applicable, for instance, to the rise of spontaneous citizens' movements, which are devoted to creating a future but not fascinated with the past and its mystification. They attempt to solve the problems they have experienced without trusting traditional "normal institutionalised politics". In other words, they try to act in a style clearly differing from earlier known styles.

Dewey argues that thinking has been the method by which individuals have attempted to escape the dangers of uncertainty. However, everyday life is full of unfulfilled hopes, destroyed expectations and contingent catastrophes. The empirical world we face is rough and hard. Thus my essential argument is that in practical everyday life there are continuously emerging problems. Political action is thus bound closely to the problems we experience in existing in the environment in which we interact. When people act politically they thus define some issue or situation as the problem and try to solve it.

When politics is regarded as problem-oriented action it subsumes experience, which is exactly what political action is based on. Political action and experience are connected to each other; they imply each other. Without experience there is only *political behaviour*, that is, political activities following on from habitual conventions. This refers to the automatic compliance to doctrines and orders and routinised and ritualised performance in general. It is typical for political behaviour that style has withered away from it or the dimension of style is very weak in it.

POLITGENICITY OF STYLE

Style is restricted expressly to *activities*. Style is explicitly a standpoint on concrete activity and this is why I categorically reject the notion that style is but a worthless surface of politics behind which the true contents of political activity can be found (cf. Nelson 1998, 169-171). The concept of style has something to give for a study which concentrates on the new political actors and on those attempting renewal. In order to succeed, the new political actors must be able to stand out from the existing political actors and the renewing political actors must be able to stand out from their own old styles. The forming of new activities as such and the renewing of the traditional activities has always involved some kind of dimension of style. All kinds of beginnings of new political activities require carefully considered style attempting to be original. This kind of activity requires a new kind of art, that is, *the art of political style.*

Above I paid attention to the political actors' attempt to stand out from others as a starting point of the analysis of political styles. One of the main points of my article is the idea that it is much more fruitful to use John Nelson's expression *form-with-content,* that is, the inseparable unity of form and content. The other thing Nelson stresses is politics as virtuous speech-in-action. Only in this way can politics become sound and vital action (Nelson 1998). I want to emphasise the concrete form-with-content of action as in the research on the style of activities. The art of political style means merging form and content in an original and innovative way. This must be done again and again, situation by situation.

The art of political style means just the original and innovative merging of form and content (Lappalainen 2002). The art of merging form and content can be illustrated with an analogy taken from film theory. Marcel Martin argues that modern films are based on primitive direct charms, imitating voices and images of nature. However, he emphasises that these signs should be more artistically/skilfully arranged. Creating films in other words requires *the art of arranging signs* so that the images of films do not only go simply on the screen one after another but the images have – as Martin calls it – a substance. I myself, consider this to be the resonance element of the film, awakening a genuine experience and not a mere mental image. In that case "*the film gives us something more from the events than the events themselves*" (Martin 1971, 25). For this reason photogenicity can be talked of. Marcel argues as a conclusion "*that the contemporary film is neither language nor show but it has become style*" (Martin 1971, 255). In the films which have original style "*the division into form and content becomes impossible and absurd (…) and language is ennobled to a substance*" (Martin 1971, 257).

Creating the form-with-content of political action requires that the art and the political form-with-content must be original, like the one in the films. If the political actor will create this kind of form-with-content, he/she must be able to act appealingly and convincingly. The event constructing the form-with-content of political action must be somehow more than is constructed of photogenicity in the films. I call this process the construction of *politgenicity* of action. The more independent the politgenicity of political action is the more artfully

the form and the content have merged in each other. In this case political action has more intensive style, in other words, it is created with imagination and creative ability but not with prejudices.

When outlining the approach of researching political styles John Nelson emphasises the expressive elements of action. His contribution to the discussion of theme is above all the concept of trope. By concept of trope Nelson means the *turn* of a speech and action. The other characters of the trope are movements, dynamics and changes in the direction of action or a turn in the course of events. Every turn creates the forms of action, that is, the figure, (Nelson 1998, xv-xvi, 170). According to the dictionary of foreign words the prefix tropo means turning or change (Nurmi et al. 2001, 471). I add here the connotation, the convincing way to stand out. The concept of the trope-filled action in a way specifies the concept of form-with-content. It describes the form-with-content itself and the way of constructing it. As a result of the construction of form-with-content politgenicity of action is formed.

I have called the trope-filled, original and discerning form-with-content the politics of trope (Lappalainen 2002). Trope-filled action is analogous with art "which is proud of originality, novelties and innovations" (Shusterman 1997, 25). The field of art is constantly growing and art entails inherently looking for something new. This kind of art is analogous with the style-intensive politgenic action beginning ever new and working up its form-with-content.

Any given politics of tropes is not automatically style sensitive, but always requires the art of political judgement. It requires *a certain kind of art* to perceive alternatives, to create fresh alternatives to the existing figures of politics. Political action, including the intensive dimension of style, requires inventing new issues, new tropes, original stories and 'odd' ways of political communication. A politician aiming at intensive style does not bind her/himself to a certain alternative at all but plays with options. She/he invents new images from old ones and generates strange compositions from familiar arrangements. She/he creates surprising spectacles, beginnings, failures and futures. Style intensive politics is expressive poetic politics (see Nelson 1998, 160, 169-171).

Trope-filled style refers to any given deviation from the contextual norms. Personal expressions being opposites of clearly objective ones must be examined. The concept of style can also be used differently. It can mean the usual way of speaking and acting. Impersonal scientific writing or certain actors' statements capable of prediction are examples of this sort of non-intense political activity. This is just normal political behaviour having become routinised. Only distinguishing itself from the setting of activity utilised earns the value of politgenic action. In other words, intensiveness as such, is a condition of this kind of style (cf. Wallace 1992, 16). I consider the exception and creative resistance to be the method of constructing trope-filled significances. The political actor does not break rules in order to act in a unique way but to find new information and to perform it in a new way (cf. Wallace 1992, 17).

THE INTERNET AS A FORUM OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The utilisation of the Internet in the development of democracy is a popular theme in the scientific discussion of the topic. It may open possibilities for better democracy if it is used skilfully. Net democracy can be a real alternative to the plebiscite democracy of today in which the citizens are required to submit themselves to the choices of the competing elite (Walch 1999, 13; Slevin 2000, 78). Governments have used the Internet in several countries for the improvement of transparency and for listening to the wishes of their citizens. Net democracy or teledemocracy is often organised *by inviting* citizens to participate in political discussions (see Slevin 2000, 47 and also Introduction; Molinari and Lehtonen in this volume). The aim of national states is to create political mechanisms in which the problems of uncertainties of late-modern societies, as unpredicted action, could be solved (Slevin 2000 20-21). As Beck argues, the authorities have to get ready for possible resistance to their plans, for example, the building of new motorways, nuclear power and chemical plants. The citizens are heard because the authorities want to know in advance if they consider the

building of the new institutions harmful. One wants to get ready for citizens' spontaneous subpolitical action in this way.

These kinds of arrangements created above can be called public involvement (Lappalainen 2002, see also Introduction in this volume). It refers to a willingness of the authorities to involve various interest groups, for example in the planning of a motorway. Consultation of the critical actors is considered important. They are groups supplying all-round expertise and new views to the discussion. It is essential to involve the groups which may disturb the planning process or may make execution of the plan more difficult. The very aim of the involvement is to prevent conflicts; the key concept is *cooperation* between the authorities and regional and local interest groups and other actors (see Loikkanen et al. 1997, 16).

It is important to notice what public involvement is not. It is an alternative for influencing the grass-roots level, for demonstrations, and for spontaneous contacts with the authorities. Such public involvement may become a trap for the political actors in the sense that it can tame intensity of action. Public involvement is not an experience in the same sense as action is because it is organised from above and because it is consultation. However, taming of action is not an automatic process as a consequence of involvement but it depends on the actors themselves. Action can also exist in the arrangements of public involvement.

Public involvement utilising the Internet is apparent, for example, in a report by the city of Tampere. The report suggests channels to *improve the participation of the inhabitants of Tampere* (hereafter the IPI-report). It states that participation means close interaction between the inhabitants, the officials and the elected representatives. A reason for developing participation is a concern about a decreasing level of political activity on the part of the citizens. The citizens neither participate in party activities nor vote as actively as earlier.

One crucial objective of participation is to commit the inhabitants to the strategy of the city. The group admits that it also examines participation from the perspective of the city administration. It connects participation with the strategy of the city which considers the model of decision-making in Tampere as an essential critical factor of success. The model refers to a quick and correctly timed decision-making

ability. An important aspect of public involvement is apparent in the report when the group tries to include the expertise of the inhabitants when the services of the city are being planned.

The electronic forms of participation the IPI group proposes are tools for gathering the opinions of the inhabitants. The city administration needs to know the views of the inhabitants before the decision making process begins. Such arrangements are elements of public involvement organised from above; the aim is to call on the inhabitants to join in the discussions. The Director of Communications of the city of Tampere argues that the Internet supports the present process of democratic decision-making because the citizens get more information and can better express their opinions. Thus there are "more cookies in the decision-making process" (Seppälä 2002b). However, it is not evident that these cookies are eaten. It is very obvious that the officials making the preparations as well as decision-makers use the arguments presented by the citizens selectively so that they can use them to justify their own views. On the other hand, the IPI group is clearly aware of the fact that electronic participation also enables publishing of the themes of the inhabitants based on their own experience. For example, it proposes the possibility to send an electronic civil appeal.

The group proposes the establishment of the preparation forum on the home pages of the city. Strong elements of public involvement are apparent in it. The group regards the preparation forum as "controlled and regulated activity". It would operate so that in the first phase the officials take one issue from the agenda and put it on the home page of the city when the agenda is published. The officials make a summary of the issue to which a feedback form is connected. The comments will be recorded on the discussion pages if the inhabitants want it. However, the IPI report does not tell for which reasons this issue in question is brought up. Thus the officials have to make choices which all the inhabitants may not like. This kind of selection can ignore some other matter which can be much more significant for some inhabitants. The matter chosen as the subject of the discussion can also be presented in a certain light when the summary is written. In other words it is easy to direct the net discussion to some certain issues by skilful rhetoric.

During the second phase the significance of the organiser of the discussion becomes greater. The group proposes that the persons preparing the significant issues produce a package of information on the Internet before the agenda is published. The package of information must be made on the basis of choices and that is why it of course cannot be a totally objective picture of the issue. It is obvious that at this phase a struggle is formed concerning the question of whose information is most relevant and most convincing. During the third phase the preparation documents are available for the inhabitants on the Internet "as widely as is considered necessary".

THE INTERNET AND THE FORMATION OF A NEW SPACE OF POLITICAL EXPERIENCE

I argued in the first chapter that the Internet changes political activities. The significance of the change is described by the fact that building of the electronic networks in the early 1990's can be compared with a railway network built in the western parts of the USA (Jordan 1999, 173). The change is really profound if one can show that the electronic break-through either facilitated the fall of the Soviet Union or was a factor accelerating the process of democratising and that the 1996 U.S presidential elections signified the death of the traditional political system and the formation of the new digital nation (Katz 1997, cited in Jordan 1999, 163).

The change is significant indeed if "the Chinese authorities consider the information spreading through the Internet as a threat" (…) and "*if the Internet network changes the basis of the state of China unavoidably*" because the authorities are not able to prevent the spread of information on it (Helsingin Sanomat 15.7. 2002; cf. Paltemaa in this volume). The spread of information technology does not necessarily overturn undemocratic systems but can support groups and individuals working for transparency necessary to democracy (cf. Walch 1999, 116). The Internet also changes traditional representative political systems and bureaucracies; it is a new tool to make and to distribute immaterial commodities such as ideas (Jordan 1999, 165). The profound change caused by the Internet also means the formation of a

new space of experience. The Internet gives people innumerable new opportunities to experience the environment.

The Internet as an inseparable element of everyday life is a remarkable change because a new way of utilising information is formed (Walch 1999; Slevin 2000). The most important service offered by the Internet, WWW (World Wide Web), makes the Internet a huge library, a gigantic picture gallery and a worldwide notice board. From the perspective of civil society the Internet extends public space hugely. The new publicity created by the network is a dialogic space, that is, a new space of experience (cf. Sassi 2000 178). It has been proposed that the users *experience* cyberspace as a special space consisting of information. Cyberspace is in particular a space full of information. With the help of the Internet people can extend their information capacity (Jordan 1999 59, 85-86). Gordon Graham defines the Internet as follows:

> "To get some grasp of what the internet is, we need to imagine a combination of library, gallery, recording studio, cinema, billboard, postal system, shopping arcade, timetable, bank, classroom, newspaper and club bulletin. We should then multiply this by an indefinitely large number and give it unlimited geographical spread" (Graham 1999, 23-24).

This kind of a horizon enables the most manifold opportunities for experiencing. The Internet changes people's experiences also for the reasons that its basic property is speed, accelerating all activities (Sassi 2000, 52). The power of the Internet is based particularly on its speed (Lebert 2003, 209). A good example of the speed of the Internet is a discussion after the bomb explosion of 11.10.2002 in a shopping centre in the city of Vantaa. The discussion started only half an hour after the explosion on a real-time arena. The discussants found out the identity of the author of the bomb attack before the police and the media (Helsingin Sanomat 17.11. 2002). The acceleration is due to the fact that the Internet is able to utilise and to process various digital materials in real time. The Internet is able to connect materials of different types endlessly and to deliver them fast (Sassi 2000, 64). It is easy to organise the store of information enlarging every day, in a

way one wants. Electric cutting and pasting is becoming a new mode of art (Schwartz 1996, 70).

The typical user of the Internet is a person having an art of experience meant by Dewey. He/she is an active hunter of information; he/she has a strong interest in the environment (cf. Rash 1997, 40). Interactivity emphasised by Dewey is a very important aspect included in the Internet. Thus there is life on the Internet in a very strong sense (see Graham 1999, 24). A new political community, net-polis, is indeed being born. The character and outlines of this political community are taking shape. It has been aptly proposed that "*the Internet resembles an ocean on which we have been thrown alone and without the exact co-ordinates we need to follow*" (Sassi 2000, 95).

The will to interact with the environment appears as the participants' way of talking more frankly and equally in the conferences using information technology in the same way as people discuss events face to face (see Jordan 1999, 82-83). Interaction in cyberspace is intensive in this way because users of the Internet have a liking of strong arguments needed in the Internet discussions (Rash 1997, 40). In other words, the various forms of interaction on the Internet require *exceptional* techniques of argumentation.

Some researchers argue that the users of the Internet can break and reconstruct traditional social borders and develop alternative means of creating communities. No authority is recognised in the news groups of the Internet and new social conventions are invented in them. The citizens can communicate with other citizens without the gate-keepers of communication technology (see Slevin 2000, 100-105). The users of information technology create special cultures which have new norms and models of performance of their own (Walch 1999). Slevin emphasises the following one:

> "We need to look afresh at how individuals might actively draw on the Internet to promote new kinds of relationships which assist rather than obstruct their attempts to make sense of a world in which the most intimate and the most distant have become directly connected" (Slevin 2000, 113).

Slevin often emphasises the Internet as this kind of a new mechanism of connection. Slevin's conclusion signifies a new space of experience and new forms of interaction formed by the users of the Internet. Slevin draws an essential conclusion from a perspective of this paper: the Internet is "a medium of practical social activity" and not only "*a medium of new opportunities for creating new forms of human association*" (Slevin 2000, 113). The Internet can create a new space of experience and thus can activate people in a new way. In other words, it can promote spontaneous innovative political action, that is, style-filled political action.

THE INTERNET AS A STIMULANT OF POLITICAL ACTION

The Internet enables new spontaneous action. For example, looking for materials from the web pages activates; thus its use deviates from passive observing of the traditional media (television, radio and printed matters) (see Rash 1997, 51). The political actors utilising the Internet face a challenging situation. In order to succeed they must make people visit their web pages and in order to become popular they must stand out from the huge mass of web pages. That is why they must perform as original and inventive actors. In other words, the art of creating politgenic action is required.

A form of experience and action is politicising, that is, a constant challenging of existing normalities and habits. The Internet can facilitate the process of politicising significantly. Different types of special publicity forming on the Internet can give impulses, can bring out important questions, can begin new discourses and activities and can challenge (symbolic) hierarchies (cf. Sassi 2000, 72; see Introduction and Baringhorst in this volume). The discussion arenas of the Internet offer the participants new ways to argue about political ideas. Use of the Internet is a form of self-realisation and active self-empowerment but not mere empowerment. Thus the Internet develops the arts emphasised by Dewey (cf. Slevin 2000, 107-117).

As is well-known various networks can be created with the help of the Internet. It can be used to co-ordinate many types of political actors. This refers not only to a growing productivity and effective-

ness of the actors but also to synergy. The sum of activities is greater than the total activity of separate parts. The Internet is also a tool for finding. It facilitates individuals and groups having a common interest in reaching each other and thus of acting together (Walch 1999, 74; see also Mosca, Gillan and Vromen in this volume). It enables the formation of constantly changing political coalitions acting with various styles.

Small political groups in particular use the Internet for searching for other similar groups. The change took place in the years 1995-96 due to the invention of search engines covering the whole world. Searching is facilitated by the way the small groups make links on their web pages. Many national and international political actors who deviate from the mainstream could not exist in their present forms without the Internet. They have often been closed out of the traditional media and their stands have not often been taken seriously. Many small groups have allied with like-minded groups with the help of the Internet and have distributed their messages more publicly than earlier. A cheap, quick, and efficient communication channel is available to them. Without it they could not organise efficiently in order to succeed. Thus communication between the like-minded groups becomes more active (Rash 1997, 21, 97).

The Internet has become the natural environment of many external groups out of the mainstream, that is, it has become a space of experience. Some civil movements claim that electronic communication, sending of information and feedback itself are powerful factors causing changes. These new ways and areas of exchange of communication and information have been enabled due to the new information technology. These forms of high technology are new arenas of activities of movements (Rash 1997, 90; Walch 1999, 63, 152, 156). The communication activists establish communities having special ethics and styles of conducting issues. For example, Amnesty International regards the ICT "as dominant strategic tactics" and not simply as an infrastructure of activities. E-mail, in particular has had very important significance at all levels of the organisation (Lebert 2003, 210).

Citizens' spontaneous action and the disturbing of traditional power structures caused by it were perceived in the Home-street project (in Finnish: Kotikatu-projekt). The Finnish Association for Local Culture and Heritage, Helsinki Neighbourhoods Association and Helsinki University of Technology launched the Home-street project in autumn 1997. The project rejected traditional activities for local culture and heritage and made a new innovation. The digital environment of activities, that is, the regional home pages serving inhabitants was constructed on the Internet (Rantanen 2003, 11). The project was not an experiment having aspects of public involvement because it was established by the inhabitants. The objective of the project was to utilise information networks especially in planning the living environment of the inhabitants. The information networks were also used for the promotion of communication, supplying information and participation. Various interactive methods of planning were also tested in the project (Rantanen 2002, 130).

The inhabitants themselves looked for new modes of activities in planning their living area. For example, the inhabitants of the Maunula district created exceptional action when they planned a shopping centre. The planning project published on the Internet challenged the city planning authorities to a new type of discussion about principles and means of planning. At the beginning there were difficulties in reacting to a new kind of participation by the inhabitants. The officials of the department of city planning considered it too active and too early (Rantanen 2002, 133). However, their attitude later became very positive and local activism affected the final result of planning at least in some way. The project researcher concludes that "a totally new culture of action was created in the Maunula district" (Rantanen 2003, 11). A transparent and public planning process like this, made possible by the Internet, has changed planning practices. The significance of the Internet is remarkable in increasing the transparency of the administration and the planning processes (Rantanen 2002, 133).

The IPI-group has also paid attention to the aspect of action relating to the arrangements of public involvement. It has also concentrated on the expectations of the inhabitants to improve oppor-

tunities of participation. It has discovered that the inhabitants want to get information about the issues to prepare early enough and in an understandable form, and to have the possibility of affecting the issues at the preparation phase. It emphasises the changing and various needs of the inhabitants who are considered as the experts because they have experience of life and knowledge of local practises. The Home-street project assumes that locally comprehensive information is crucially important. The local inhabitants create a kind of a database in their world of experiences which the public administration and planning officials should utilise. According to the experiences of the inhabitants, some places, (for example, children's play grounds, buildings and landscapes) are especially important (ibid., 131).

The IPI-group wants to exclude authoritative enlightening and compulsion of the inhabitants in urban participation. It points out that the inhabitants participate when they consider it necessary but not when and how the administration expects. The Director of Communications of the City of Tampere has concluded that the interactive form of participation connected to near, concrete and current matters seems to succeed well (Seppälä 2002a, 128). In other words, the inhabitants act when they *experience* it to be necessary. For example, they may launch a planning process. The inhabitants are expecting quick feedback and transparency on the part of the administration in such subpolitical situations. The municipal organisations should be capable of reacting flexibly and fast. When the documents relating to the planning process are published on the Internet it is possible to effectively disperse the feeling that planning is secretly performed (cf. Rantanen 2002, 135).

The Evolution of eCommunities project carried out by the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of the University of Tampere constructed a participation site (The Manse square) aiming to support civil activity. The purpose of the Manse square was to challenge the assumption that the public is the passive receiver and consumer. (See Lehtonen in this volume.) It also tried to develop the site so that civil groups could edit the site as they wished. It had been discovered earlier that innovativeness and social learning are often demonstrated in projects of this kind. The project was indeed able to strengthen civil innovativeness. It fulfilled the most important

criterion of the movement of social inspiring, learning with the help of communal activity. The movement requests actors to question, to argue, to act and be committed to them. It also emphasises learning based on experiences which starts from concrete action and ends in observation and reflective discussion. (Kotilainen 2004.)

The aim of the Manse forum which was a part of the Manse square was to add and strengthen interaction with the surrounding society. For example, the citizen based system of the initiative was constructed on the Manse forum. There the inhabitants were given instructions on how to launch initiatives. It was possible to comment on the initiatives in the discussion area and thus to develop them. The personal experience of the writers was a characteristic of the texts published on the Manse forum (Hokka et al. 2004).

Action which took place in the Manse forum shook the frozen practices of the local political discussion and decision-making process. The citizens have been inspired to take part more actively than before and to use the Internet – especially as a tool of participation. Action-oriented activity and spontaneous publicity challenged the traditional representative municipal democracy and the passive role offered to the citizens. The researchers who analysed the discussions on the Manse forum conclude that people are ready to compare their views and to discuss constructively when an opportunity is provided to them (Hokka et al. 2004). The dialogic culture of discussion and the role of the citizens, that is, deliberation have strengthened.

A new spontaneous form of civil action, civil journalism, was experimented in the project. The project searched for new aspects of local communication utilising the net. The idea was applied so that correspondents who wrote stories on the online magazine established with the support of the project were searched for from different districts. The most important question of the experiment was, what kinds of issues are important and worth reporting according to the inhabitants (Martikainen 2004). The project was supposed to find the answer from the activities of the inhabitants which were considered as an alternative to hearing from the decision-makers and other official quarters belonging to traditional news journalism. The learning by doing method formulated by Dewey is thus a dimension of civil journalism; people themselves write the stories. In that case it is supposed that they write

about their own experiences. In the course of this process they learn to express themselves and to listen to others (cf. Ibid.).

The researchers found out in the empirical studies that very many of the correspondents' stories were personal and not only informative. They clearly had an ability to express themselves, in other words, they had the personal, that is, an approach based on experience of the issues of which they wrote. They also had alternative views to the themes compared to the mainstream media. The originality of the stories was due to the fact that they were not based on the notices or bulletins. It is worth mentioning in this context that the correspondents did not just inform but also shared information with others and the net journal did not become a journal of whatever but the writers committed themselves to their e-journal. That is why they were responsible for it. (Ibid.)

A researcher of the project concludes that the Internet can become a part of the citizens' medium and that the Internet will contain small-scale journals of various districts produced by the inhabitants themselves in the future. They will probably not have a large number of readers but will tell of important and interesting matters of inhabitants' immediate surroundings. (Ibid.) Thus it is a question of strengthening spontaneous subpolitics based on experience.

THE INTERNET AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY

The internet is a tool and space for new political activity and politicising. The Internet offers new opportunities to act with multiple styles. The artful and flexible use of the Internet can transfer political processes to the micro level; in other words, can enable a new kind of civil activity. I have used the verb *enable* often in this paper, because the actors willing to utilise the net must themselves obtain the arts needed in its utilisation. The actors have to be active in order that they can utilise the opportunities the Internet offers. Thus the Internet is an art-intensive tool and space. Thus the Internet inspires an appraisal of a *society of opportunities.* I mean by this phenomenon the spontaneous and independent action the Internet offers citizens.

The Internet is a forum of *interaction*. It enables the actors to interact with the environment in a new way, that is, on a wider scale, more intensively and in a more multi-faceted way than before. Because the Internet enables versatile interaction, it also enables the most different kinds of *experiences*. There distances disappear and the only limit of movement is imagination. I would like to emphasise the meaning of experience and the new space of experience in research of the Internet.

Political actors can interact on the Internet with a speed and create local, national and transnational action never seen before. On the net the actors can find other like-minded actors from different parts of the world with whom they have common political problems to solve. It can be used for the creation of new political linkages and coalitions of activities which can reach from one continent to another. Citizens are capable of politicising faster, more easily and more fundamentally than before. For example, local problems can easily be raised as the subjects of global struggle. In other, more general words, the Internet breaks down traditional borders, e.g. the borders of nation-states.

It has been very difficult for citizens to publish spontaneously in the traditional media. The Internet has changed this situation essentially because there is also plenty of *open public space* for them. The attempts to censor the Internet do not seem to succeed; information removed from the net emerges somewhere else in the world. Because the actors can spread unfiltered information spontaneously on the net, their possibilities to pursue power improve. The phenomenon called de-medialisation is obviously in a very early phase; nobody knows which styles the political actors will still develop on the net (see Introduction in this volume).

When the open access to most versatile information is remembered in addition to that stated above, the new types of "forms-with-contents" of political action can be developed with the help of the Internet and on the Internet. The net is a huge resource of information which is worth utilising when exceptional political action is created and justified. In other words, the political action of tropes can be constructed limitlessly with the help of the Internet. This "only" requires innovativeness on the part of the actors.

My most important conclusion is that *the Internet is fundamentally a space of politics of tropes; it can be used for generating an enormous amount of political action of tropes – also in offline space.* I call this state of affairs a new degree of political action of politgenity. The Internet does not engender political action of tropes automatically, but it requires the art of political innovativeness from the actors. The Internet is a kind of open, borderless, and (mostly) unmonitored democratic laboratory where new political styles of action can be invented and experimented upon. The concept of politics of tropes developed by me always contains the aspect of style. It contains the well-known aspects of contingency, the unpredictability of the future and the possibility of matters existing in any way. Thus the actor of the politics of tropes always has to judge how the degree of politgenity of action can be increased in a credible and convincing way.

The Internet can also be used for creating interaction which refers to the traditional meaning of the concept. I mean an opportunity to participate in municipal or national decision-making offered by the public authorities or hearing from citizens on the issues concerning traditional political communities. In that case it is not a question of the citizens' experience causing action but a call to participate presented by the authorities, in other words, it is a question of public involvement. Such interaction does not mean symmetry between the decision-makers and the citizens but a strengthening of the frozen structures of power (cf. Ridell 2001). However, action based on experience is not an excluded possibility in this context. In other words, the citizens called to participate can act in the structures of involvement. In that case *the citizens invite* the officials and the elected representatives to the public space of the net to tell and discuss their own views (cf. Heinonen et al. 2001). In that case the border line between public involvement and action is very vague.

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TIM JORDAN

The politics of technology: Three types of hacktivism

INTRODUCTION

Asking a question about the relationship between the Internet and politics requires some consideration.

Are we talking about the effect of the Internet on politics? This is a problematic formulation because it leaves the Internet itself unmarked, rather focusing on the presumed effects of the Internet. Despite this, such arguments are familiar. The most frequent example is the 'Internet treats censorship as damage and routes around it' slogan, coined by online activist and hacker John Gilmore. Most internet analysts will also have, at one time or another, also heard or read the myth that the Internet was designed to survive nuclear war. The latter being a myth in the full sense that, whatever its truth, the real function of retelling it as a story is to teach the listener the moral that the Internet has an inherent politics of the type Gilmore sloganeered. (Jordan 1999a, 35-36.)

Though familiar, and often containing a grain of sense, such formulations leave the Internet untouched by analysis and also assume that the Internet is one thing that can have a politics assigned to it that also affects offline spaces. Such arguments may now be seen to characterise, particularly, early studies of the Internet as analysts tried to come to terms with this new communicative medium that seemed (and still seems) so much more than a fancy system for sending letters. However, these days we should be cautious about taking up such a position, we know the Internet is a complex technical and cultural

system whose ability to create a clear dividing line between online and offline spaces is complicated and disputed.

Another formulation of the question would be: Are we talking about a new 'cyber' politics that the Internet is producing? Subtly different to the previous formulation, here the Internet is analysed for any novel or innovative political forms it might be associated with. Rather than leaving the Internet unmarked this takes the Internet as a subject of analysis, then pushes the analysis towards political spheres. At a higher level of analysis we might think of Himanen's and Wark's contrasting theories of the hacker ethic and its putative wide social effect as an example of this expectation that an 'internet politics' will reorder society (Himanen 2001, Wark 2004). Both Wark and Himannen, however, still locate their analysis within a blanket notion of 'the Internet'.

Again, though of value, such an orientation produces a particular take on the Internet and politics. Most particularly it fails to introduce the key complexity of exploring political effects in relation to particular internet technologies; we need to be aware that the effects of Myspace and YouTube are different to those of Instant Messenger and email. It is only from such more nuanced understandings that we would be able to put together a theory of an overall 'cyber' or Internet politics.

Yet even within a more complex analysis that substitutes 'internet technologies' for 'the Internet' there remains a similar structure to the first approach in which a particular internet technology has social and cultural effects on a wider society. This more complex understanding still argues for or implies a causal relationship between an internet technology and social or cultural factors, even though it does not also assume or argue that different technologies add up to the one cyber-politics. Though we should not rule out internet technologies having such consequences, we know enough now to be cautious about imputing effects to internet technologies that are not also mediated by effects back on such technologies by users and other technologies. A subtle, persistent (and not always misleading) technological determinism is in this way threaded through such ways of putting the question of politics and the Internet.

There is an almost directly inverse reaction to that just outlined, that was also perhaps more prevalent early in studies of the Internet.

This is a reaction which claims that nothing fundamental has changed following the emergence of the Internet simply because the Internet and internet technologies result from and reinforce existing social forces. Kevin Robbins' early work on the Internet reacted strongly against claims of an entirely new world created from virtual social relations, yet his own responses were marked by his oppositional stance. Robbins often fails to take account of the particularities of social relations dependant on internet technologies, instead opposing them wholesale. (Robbins 1999.) Miller and Slater's ethnography of Trinidadian use of the Internet took a similar tactic but worked at a micro level to argue that the Internet brought little difference in communicative practices of Trinidadians (Miller & Slater 2000). Such accounts tend to reverse technological determinism and strip internet technologies of their specificities, in the process failing to engage with the social and cultural effects that are embedded in and produced by Internet technologies. Such approaches offer strong correctives to overly enthusiastic accounts that impute only good social and cultural effects from the Internet, but they are also heavily marked by this opposition and often remain captured by the fundamental model of an Internet that does or does not have social effects.

Such approaches that explore politics and the Internet by arguing over whether the Internet has changed anything or not, can also all too often rely on what are fundamentally trivial formulations. Such trivial approaches also often derive an appearance of urgency by seeming to ask important questions. For example, has the Internet changed capitalism? Manifestly not, if we mean the fundamental structures of capitalism, but that does not mean the Internet, or particular internet technologies, have not been part of important social changes relevant to shifting forms of capitalism. Or, from an opposite viewpoint, has the Internet changed personal communication? Manifestly yes, if we mean there are different forms of personal communication available, though the significance of new communication technologies like email or IRQ for significant social change is arguable. Between the failure to enter into a more complex relationship with technological determinism and the potentially trivial nature of many questions posed even though they often claim to lead to the analysis of significant social

changes causally related to the Internet, exploring politics associated with internet technologies has at times been poorly formulated.

The two inverse processes of arguing for or against causal relations between the Internet and social change have, I believe, a tendency to remove internet technologies, and their specific social and technical processes, from discussion. In so doing they can produce blindness to the kinds of social divides, inequalities of power and oppressions and subjections which may or may not be specific to social contexts in which internet technologies are active. Such issues seem to me to be the centre of an engaged political analysis which pays attention to the specificity of any politics that is found in the context of particular internet technologies. From such a basis I also wish to open up general conclusions about the Internet and politics, though without dislocating myself from the need to analyse the complexity of social, technical and cultural factors that are involved in internet technologies.

I will attempt to do this by exploring a number of related politics that could not have existed without the existence of a range of internet technologies. From these politics I will then draw general propositions that will, in the conclusion, be inter-related for a tentative and hopefully complex view on the Internet and politics. These are all, drawing on my previous research on activist forms of politics. This is not because I think such politics are primary but simply because they are my areas of expertise. I feel someone could come to the kinds of propositions I define by starting with very different political interventions and I will tentatively indicate some such directions as I explore the implications of activist uses of the Internet.

In addition, this approach does not presume the Internet, or actions enabled by internet technologies, exist in isolation from something we might call the 'real' or 'physically co-present' world. Rather, the activisms under analysis are ones that could not have existed unless the relevant internet technologies existed. While this identifies some activisms as intimately tied to internet technologies, it should not be read as a presumption that the online and offline are fundamentally different, let alone mutually exclusive and causally related. Instead, possible differences between online and offline activisms will need to be traced and their nature justified on the basis of analysis.

I will outline three figures of virtual politics, three types of what is more and more frequently being called 'hacktivism': (1) mass embodied online protest; (2) internet infrastructure and information politics; and, (3) communicative practices and organisation (cf. Gillan and Hintikka in this volume). Through these three types I hope to exemplify some of the complexity of politics that has collided with the Internet and, by the end, make some proposals for more general conclusions. The applicability of such figures for exploring the Internet and politics derives from the impossibility of their actions unless the Internet existed. We can for this reason be sure that the politics I will explore are connected to the Internet and internet technologies.

MASS EMBODIED ONLINE PROTEST

The emblematic mass embodied online protest was run by UK-based hacktivist group the Electrohippies against the computer network servicing the 1999 Seattle World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting. The organisers claim this online protest, which ran simultaneously as the famous street protests in Seattle, attracted 450,000 protesters. This mass action ran in this way. The Electrohippies set up a website with explanations and justifications of their action. From a particular page someone could choose either high or low bandwidth protests. Once the protester clicked on a link they were led to another page that automatically downloaded and ran a small java script on the protester's computer. This script automatically directed a browser to access particular pages on the computer network servicing the WTO conference and to constantly reload those pages. The low bandwidth version targeted three pages simultaneously while the high bandwidth version targeted six pages. Enough protesters equalled enough requests for information to the WTO server to impair or stop it. (Jordan & Taylor 2004, 74-79.)

The theory behind such attacks emerged in the mid-1990s and argued for the importance of implementing forms of electronic civil disobedience. (CAE 1994; 1996) We can also immediately see the parallel between classic civil disobedience tactics such as street protests and the Ehippies action. Bodies are placed into channels in order to

block whatever flows down that channel: for the Ehippies information blocked information, for those in the street physical bodies blocked other bodies trying to enter the WTO conference building.

Attacks in which a targeted server attached to the Internet is bombarded with so much information in such a short space of time that it fails are well known on the Internet. They are usually called ddos (distributed denial of service) attacks and are normally launched by one or a few people, utilising the multiplicative powers of the Internet. For example, someone can infect a range of computers around the Internet with a particular programme, often called a zombie. Once this is done, the controller can order all the zombies to simultaneously start demanding information from one targeted site, leading to that site disappearing from the Internet because it is overloaded with information requests and can no longer respond. With methods like this such sites as amazon.com, cnn.com and others have been removed from the Internet for short periods. The electrohippies vociferously distinguished their action from ddos attacks in the following way:

> What *the electrohippies* did for the WTO action was a ***client-side distributed DoS action***. The electrohippies method of operation is also truly distributed since instead of a few servers, there are tens of thousands of ***individual computer users*** involved in the action. The requests sent to the target servers are generated by ordinary Internet users using their own desktop computer and (usually) a slow dial-up link. That means client-side distributed actions require the efforts of real people, taking part in their thousands simultaneously, to make the action effective. If there are not enough people supporting then the action it doesn't work. The fact that service on the WTO's servers was interrupted on the 30th November and the and 1st of December, and significantly slowed on the 2nd and 3rd of December, demonstrated that there was significant support for the *electrohippies* action. (Electrohippies Collective 2000; emphasis in original.)

The legitimacy of an Ehippies' action is achieved by the implied democracy of enough people being willing to commit themselves to the blockade. Democracy here is not one vote and one body but is the civil disobedience democracy of masses of bodies expressing a popular

will. A number of things are needed to ensure this. There must be some way of defeating any accusation that these are not 'real people' but are zombies spewing out information; the protest is only effective if it is the result of the 'efforts of real people'. The Ehippies do this by limiting their ability to multiply the bodies who sit at computers to three, if the body has clicked on the low bandwidth link, or to six, if the body clicked on the high bandwidth link. As we can now see, the client side model the Ehippies utilise is a particular formation of Internet technologies designed to produce a mass demonstration only if there are many real people demonstrating.

This approach is viewed by some as perverse such that a spokesman for another hacktivist group accused the Ehippies of creating a tactic that was the equivalent of a duck pecking an opponent to death when there was dynamite available for the job (Jordan & Taylor 2004, 167). The Ehippies effort though was to avoid precisely the elitism inherent in one hand throwing one stick of dynamite and to ensure their protest carried with it a certain legitimacy. This legitimacy was a democratic one, familiar to all of us through over a century of protest and violent and non-violent direct action threading through such campaigns as that for Indian independence or the Civil Rights campaign in the USA. The politics of the Ehippies is an avowedly old, formulated in the offline and populist one.

Yet, despite this lineage, the Ehippies' attempt was not simple. Unlike the street protests in Seattle, which took tremendous feats of organisation but which posed minimal, if any, new political or organisational questions, the Ehippies had to fashion not just the organisation which drew people onto the virtual streets but they had to fashion the very possibility that virtual streets could be populated by virtual bodies that had referents to real bodies. The Ehippies had to reform Internet technologies—in this case essentially a combination of webpages and javascript—while relying on other technologies—packet switching, routing, dns—in order to produce the possibility of an online, mass, embodied demonstration against the the WTO meeting in Seattle. The virtual bodies had to be built and the virtual streets conceptualised as a place of civil disobedience for the possibility of electronic mass action to occur.

Having produced the possibility of an online demonstration by coding java and embedding this in web-pages, the Ehippies could then go about the familiar task of calling for participants. The Internet also helps with this, given its well known communicative technologies. It is also easier for participants to go to an online demonstration, as it requires a click on a hyper-link rather than travel over road, rail, air or sea. But what distinguishes the Ehippies civil disobedience was that they had to create the possibility of disobedience rather than set about organising that disobedience.

There is an interplay here between political ambitions, forged and defined in offline, pre-Internet worlds, and their realisation in the context of the Internet. Some things are held solid and others are made fluid for the bodiless to allow bodies. The basis for such interventions, and thus the very basis for electronic civil disobedience, lies in the expertise to manipulate Internet technologies so that a particular politics is made possible. The ethics and philosophy of civil disobedience that the Ehippies used, along with others such as the Electronic Disturbance Theatre, pre-exist the Internet. The existence of a philosophy and practice of civil disobedience allowed some activists to ponder how this philosophy could be brought to the Internet and their path leads them necessarily to the manipulation of internet technologies: programming, understanding packets and routing, being able to set up networks of computers connected to the Internet and so on.

The political landscape of the Internet sketched before us by mass embodied online action is one in which the ability to mobilise expertise underpins the creation of particular political moments. This ability is not akin to that of mobilising cars to carry activists but is two-fold for it is, first, the ability to create the possibility of a particular type of political action and only second comes the ability to make a political moment happen. This point can be provisionally summarised this as a proposition;

Proposition One: The possibility of an Internet politics is created by the ability to mobilise expertise in the manipulation of Internet technologies.

I will return to this proposition later but I would like to point out immediately that it does not allow of an online/offline distinction. The

mobilisation of expertise in internet technologies is an inextricably mingled process. One anecdote illustrates this. The Electrohippies gradually withdrew from mass protests in the early 2000s. For a time their focus shifted to directly contesting anti-terrorist initiatives, most particularly in the UK against anti-terrorist legislation that seemed to define any form of cracking or computer misuse as terror. But not long after engagement with these issues the Ehippies pretty much ceased activism.

In discussion, the reason given for this change was that the technical expertise that fuelled the Ehippies had been provided by a number of IT professionals, some based in the USA and others elsewhere. These professionals had remained in the background, keeping their identities relatively secret and allowing a UK-based activist to operate as their public face. Several of the Ehippies had decided that it was time to pull back from such activism until the war on terror's effect on activism and the Internet became clearer. This is not a story specific to the online, rather it resonates far more widely through the alter-globalisation or global justice movement; for example, it is noticeable that following the Genoa protest and before 9/11 there was serious discussion within the alter-globalisation movement about moving into different activisms than its characteristic large scale protests against globalisation organisations like the WTO.

I am not suggesting a simple cause and effect in which 9/11 scared off activists, rather that it (and many other factors such as the nature of the Genoa event) was a generalised political moment, owned by nothing we might refer to as online or offline, at which activists reflected. Some, like some technicians in the Ehippies, demobilised while others, such as mass hacktivist group the Electronic Disturbance Theatre, took this as a key moment to continue in changed circumstances.

INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE AND INFORMATION POLITICS

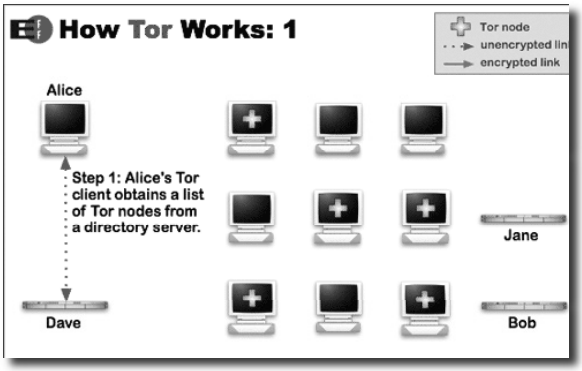
A different way of approaching how politics works in the age of the Internet, or how the Internet and politics inter-mesh, is to focus on a politics that is about the Internet itself. I wish to distinguish within the range of politics that only exist because the Internet exists, a specific grassroots politics that devotes itself to the Internet. Within such a

politics we will find further complexities emerging from the politic-technical complex that arises with the widespread use of internet technologies.

Seemingly new forms of politics often emerge from the inter-section of existing politics. For example, the politics of mass embodied online protest emerged from the intersection of the alter-globalisation movement, internet technologies and the ethics and tactics of civil disobedience. Infrastructure and information politics of the Internet emerged from the inter-section of net.cultures, open source and globalisation. Net.cultures contributed a strong political sense of the desire for free flows of information, both in terms of freedom to access any information and freedom to do so securely. (Silver & Massani 2006.) From Open Source came the model of collaborative software production utilising the communication and distribution capabilities of internet technologies (Weber 2004). From globalisation came the recognition of the importance of the Internet to a rapidly changing world and the political opportunity offered to those with open source and net.cultures to effect political change in ways consonant with their ethics (Castells 2000). Having looked at direct action built from civil rights philosophies that leads to a politics that, in some ways, runs counter to the potentialities of internet technologies, I wish to turn to this second form of internet-based direct action.

In this type of action we meet hacktivists generating coding projects that try to implement in the infrastructure of the Internet a politics that valorises free secure flows of information. Some of the better known projects address ways of overcoming national firewalls, such as those the Chinese and Singaporean governments run to filter all Internet traffic in and out of their national boundaries. For example, *CameraShy* offers a way of hiding information within graphics files that can be displayed over the Internet (Sourgeforge.net: CameraShy 2006). The hidden information is then available to anyone with the modified CameraShy browser and the password. Another example is *ScatterChat*, an anonymous, secure instant messaging client (ScatterChat 2006). In both these and other similar projects the focus is on the ability to anonymously and securely pass any information that can be appropriately digitised. Let me explore this a little more closely with the example of the *Tor Network* (2006).

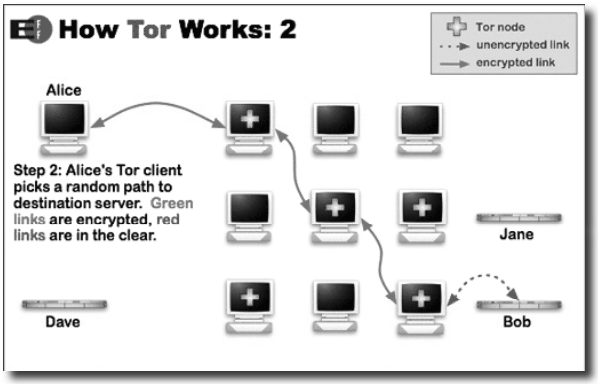
Like the software innovations just mentioned Tor aims to create anonymity and security for flows of information. The first point is that such free flows in total cannot be secured by any one application. Tor breaks the Internet down into one aspect, that of the packet of data which flows from the sender to the receiver and back. Packet switching breaks any data object sent over the Internet into a series of packets that are then routed across different pipes and nodes to their destination. Each such packet consists of two parts; the data payload and the header. The data payload is the 'content' (music, email, video, instant message, etc.) while the header contains data about the source, destination, size, timing and other such necessary information to transport the payload. The difficulty is that a great deal can be learned by tracking someone's traffic and analysing the headers, even if the data payloads are themselves encrypted and unavailable to a spy. This potential breach of anonymity, this identification of information patterns that can lead to a free flow of information being stabilised and connected to someone's identity, has been addressed by the complex technical innovation known as the Tor network.



Picture 1.
How Tor works: 1.

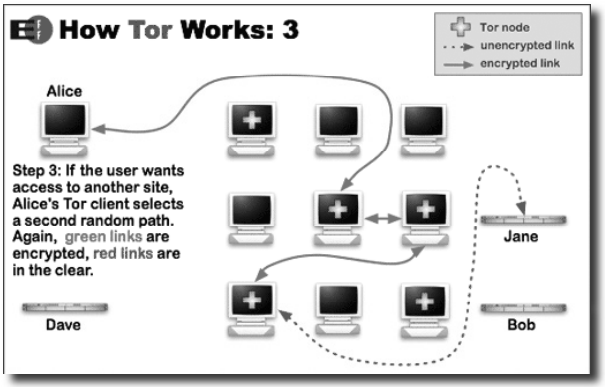
Tor works by passing requests for information from one computer through a network of Tor servers. Each hop the request makes from one server to the next is encrypted and is only known to the two computers immediately connected to each other. By linking a request for information through a series of Tor servers, the chain of identification is broken and no observer can tell where the information is coming

from or going. Once a series of servers has been linked a private network is in operation and information can flow anonymously, though subject to other tracking techniques. Each circuit lasts for a minute or a little more, any requests falling outside this time period initiate a new private network.



Picture 2.
How Tor works: 2.

In addition to protecting against traffic analysis for users, producers of information are able to hide various kinds of services such as web servers or instant messaging services. For example, a web-site can be set up that it is impossible from traffic analysis to tell who has set it up.



Picture 3.
How Tor works: 3.

The risk takers in Tor are not meant to be the users but the providers of servers, particularly those who provide the servers with the initial

database that is accessed at the beginning of the creation of a virtual Tor network. In effect, political risk and danger is placed, by technical design, on those perceived as being at less political risk because they are activists in 'liberal democracies'. Those using the network who may be at risk from authoritarian and totalitarian regimes are, it is hoped, much better hidden than the servers' owners. What we might call the collective imagination of those producing the Tor network embeds in the technical structure of Tor a particular political ethics based on an assessment of risk to differently located activists.

Let us review the specificity of Tor. First, it deals only with certain internet technologies. For example, Tor guidance says that 'Tor only works for TCP streams and can be used by any application with SOCKS support' (Tor: Overview 2006). Second, it is essentially a change to the infrastructure of the Internet. The ongoing existence of a Tor network alters what it is possible to do or not to do using internet technologies and it is, in this sense, a direct intervention into the nature of the online. Finally, there are three kinds of human actors making Tor work. First, production is a matter of harnessing expertise in coding and understanding Internet traffic. Second, enough contributors with access to computers and bandwidth must install and run Tor routers, not as complex as coding but more complex than many computer users are used to. Finally, potential users must be alerted to the existence of the network and how to install and use Tor browsers.

In contrast to embodied mass virtual protest, information politics works with the grain of the Internet. It values the ability of internet technologies to propagate and distribute data packages in ways that far exceed previous technologies both in amount and in global connectivity and it positively glories in the connection of digitisation with internet based production and distribution. The politics here revolves around a commitment to free, secure flows of data packets that builds on net.cultures that developed simultaneously with the development of computer mediated communication. Finally, this politics mobilises a mass in the masses needed to create the server 'cloud' (by September 2006 active routers numbered around 800).

We should note that this mass of routers, and the activists behind the routers, is a conceptually quite different mass to that created by the Ehippies' action and more generally aimed for in mass embodied virtual

protests. In Tor the legitimacy of the action does not revolve around the numbers of people who participate, rather the legitimacy derives from an argument about the desirability of a society that integrates free flows of information. It is a secondary and tangential consequence that the participation of many people proves that there is a democratically legitimated demand for secure free flows of information. The paradox of Tor is that it may appear to be imbued with a democratic ethos because, technically, the system will not work unless there is a mass of Tor routers. However, while it is true that without a critical mass of routers the ability to anonymise is undermined to the point of failure, this is a matter of success or failure of the technical system and is not a matter of political demand. The technical demands of Tor require a mass but this mass is not a political requirement

The dominant potential that needs to be mobilised for internet infrastructure and information politics to exist is expertise, along with some access to resources. Expertise is multi-part here involving the expertise to code appropriate software and the expertise to set up a server (though this is far less than coding requires, it is a skill not necessarily easily available). Like mass protests, there is also a need for publicity to ensure people participate. I have so far rather slid by the nature of the politics produced within such innovations as Tor, terming it generally as 'free secure flows of information'. A few further aspects of the Tor network help us to pick apart this informational politics that is integral to these technical innovations in Internet infrastructures.

First, Tor has its origins in funding and ideas generated within and between the Office of Naval Research, USA (2006) and the the Free Haven project (2006). The USA Navy has an interest in communications that cannot be spied upon, as do nearly all military organisations. The Free Haven Project was explicitly set up to explore Tor and other similar networks. For advocates of free secure flows of information the use of Naval, and other military, funding to create an anonymity network might imply contradictions, a point I will return to when discussing anti-state libertarians and internet politics, but such implications are in fact irrelevant in terms of production and deployment. What the congruence of activists like the Free Haven Project (whose short biographies reference connections to the hacking community), the USA military and those like the Hacktivismo

group (whose concerns are civil rights activists in totalitarian societies) point to, is the way this politics of information eliminates any concern with the content of information passed. Within this politics data is data is data, there is no differentiation between kinds of data being transmitted.

This point is reinforced by the second example which is that in 2006 a number of Tor servers were impounded by German police. These were 'exit servers', that is the point at which the handing on from Tor router to Tor router finishes and the desired information is accessed. Initially there was concern this might be a crackdown but it appears clear that this was because the IP numbers of these servers had shown up during an investigation into the distribution of child pornography over the Internet. (Jardin 2006.) Such a use is clearly an implication of anonymous networks, while activists couch much of their language in terms of civil rights the reality is that the networks are data neutral and must be so or the activists would transgress their principles in relation to free flows of information. Paul Taylor and I pointed this out in relation to what we called 'digitally correct hacktivism' when we quoted the Hacktivismo faq:

> Q: Do you think all information should be accessible?
> A: No. That's why we talk about 'lawfully published' information in the Hacktivismo Declaration. Essentially that cuts out things like legitimate government secrets, kiddie porn, matters of personal privacy, and other accepted restrictions. But even the term 'lawfully published' is full of landmines. Lawful to whom? What is lawful in the United States can get you a bullet in the head in China. At the end of the day we recognize that some information needs to be controlled. But that control falls far short of censoring material that is critical of governments, intellectual and artistic opinion, information relating to women's issues or sexual preference, and religious opinions. That's another way of saying that most information wants to be free; the rest needs a little privacy, even non-existence in the case of things like kiddie porn. Everyone will have to sort the parameters of this one out for themselves.
> (Cited in Jordan & Taylor 2004, 168-69.)

The Hacktivismo Declaration and its associated faq was a militant 'call to arms' of information hacktivists and it seems a remarkable abnegation within such a moment that over a key question responsibility is abandoned. This points to a failure of nerve within informational hacktivism to be willing to accept that they are totally data neutral and so their necessary bed fellows include the USA Military and child pornographers; in fact, anyone who needs secure anonymous communication.

We can understand such an information politics as a politics of the production of differences and we could theorise this as a version of the kind of politics that result from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari 1988; Jordan 1995). Deleuze and Guattari theorise a rhizomatic politics that evades state controls, forever seeking the creative moment in which something new or different can be produced. The result of such a theorisation is a politics whose primary concern is the creation of differences, not the nature or content of differences. This politics resolves into a concern for the engine of difference-production rather than exploring the consequences of making certain differences. Such a politics is blind to the vast array of political concerns we often think of as constituting the political field but is focused on the ability, the need, to continue the production of differences. In short, such a politics, paradoxically, evacuates the nature of differences for a concern with the mechanics of difference-production. (Jordan 1995.) We can see Deleuze and Guattari's joint work as, in this sense, providing a theory of informational politics that delineates the consequences of such a politics, perhaps more clearly than hacktivists are sometimes willing to. The desire of informational hacktivists is for flows of information to keep flowing and this necessitates ignoring the nature of any particular bit of information.

The innovation of this information politics is to evacuate the content of information while valorising the demand that information be able to move freely and that people be secure in moving information. Like the politics of difference it is highly creative and places at its centre the mechanics of difference production, in this case the particular differences that are produced are all in the form of information that can be digitised. However, while a kind of politics relevant to our informational age, it is also a politics that has some uncomfortable

implications for those who propound it. We have already seen the unease that child pornography causes, particularly because there are wider spheres of the wild reaches of society than just child pornography that will have need of secure anonymous communication.

Whether internet information and infrastructure hacktivists are comfortable with it or not, theirs is a data-neutral politics. Whatever can be digitised becomes of equal value within this political form, whose real object is the processes by which data is transferred so that access to information is freely, widely and securely available. This provides some explanation of the importance of expertise within this politics because the focus is on the means of transferring digitised information utilising internet technologies and affecting such means requires expertise in internet technologies.

In summary, two things come out of this discussion extending our appreciation of the Internet and politics. First, there is the recurrence of the figure of the expert and the necessity to mobilise expertise to create and prosecute Internet-enabled politics. Second, the radical politics of the Internet itself resolves into a particular informational politics entirely consonant with the technical structure of some internet technologies that, largely, ignore the nature of the data packet in favour of the production, transport and delivery of anything that can be digitised.

Proposition Two: Expertise allows intervention directly into the social, cultural, economic and political infrastructures created by internet technologies.

Proposition Three: Informational politics is a politics of difference-production and not content-production.

There is a third form of grass roots political action that is dependent on internet technologies that should be explored before pulling together the series of propositions I am articulating. This form shifts the political ground somewhat, away from direct actions and toward communication and organisation.

The arguments about the politics of the Internet advanced so far have been focused primarily on those who seek to take direct action and whose direct actions were impossible without the Internet. From this definition, two types of hacktivism have been explored, allowing the identification of issues concerning the Internet and politics. There is a third type of hacktivism that has so far been set aside but that is also important because there are hacktivists who are not focused on taking direct action but in making political action possible. Here we meet the use of the Internet's communication capabilities for political purposes, with the most famous and obvious example being Indymedia.

Indymedia is based on the politicisation of the ability some internet technologies provide to radically extend the possibilities for user-generated content to be made widely available . I will not offer an extended history of Indymedia because it is well known but, in short, software designed for community building in Sydney was utilised to set up a news sight parallel to the Seattle anti-WTO protests. This software allowed an open publishing format; that is anyone could upload a news story or a link, including audio and video. (Atton 2004; 2003.) This style spread quickly with Indymedia sites becoming closely involved in the then burgeoning alter-globalisation movement and a number of Indymedia sites emerged most of which were nationally based but some issues based, such as the Indymedia biotechnology site. The nature of Indymedia has been through changes, with some of the most important debates revolving around the openness of Indymedia; given the posting of false information, hate speech and irrelevancies (like advertisements) some editorial control has usually been asserted on Indymedia sites. This has occurred most famously in the moving of some posts from the main Indymedia feeds into other sections. For example, the UK Indymedia site allows someone to click 'view all posts' to see what has been hidden from the main newsfeeds. The guidelines for this site also note that only in rare circumstances will anything be deleted, mentioning pornography and personal details as the only examples.

In this regard, the recent explosion in user provided content on the Internet, for example on YouTube, could be seen as a depoliticisation

of an Internet style Indymedia helped to pioneer. Where Indymedia derived its energy and focus from its close association with the alter-globalisation movement, YouTube derives its energy and focus from pirated film clips, home movies, home-grown animations and a distinct absence of any political focus. However, this manifest content, which should not be passed over lightly, also relates to the latent content carried by a style of publishing that underpins both YouTube and Indymedia. This latent message is also political and suggests that some, at least, of the politics of Indymedia are not carried by the political content of its messages but by the sheer fact of people making and posting their own news which can then be distributed and consumed widely; whether that content is another episode of YouTube classic 'will it blend' (in which objects are put into blenders) or is a record of police behaviour at a demonstration. The politics here is not so much alter-globalisation as the changed relations the Internet creates in the production, distribution and consumption of media objects. (Atton 2004, 17; see also Introduction; Gillan; Lehtonen and Rättilä in this volume.)

Both Indymedia and YouTube demonstrate that it becomes possible for far more people to become journalists, documentary makers or movie makers. The barriers between production and consumption have been altered by the combination of digitisation, which radically redistributes the ability to make media objects, and the ways internet technologies allow distribution of digitised media objects. Many have also jumped to the conclusion that these changed relations necessarily imply a liberation. For example, it is possible for many people now to make moving pictures and to distribute them globally, whereas previously significant financial investment was needed for both. For radical journalists, this means that relatively inexpensive digital cameras now allow a grassroots record of events (see Rättilä in this volume). And there is some truth to such claims; however like many of the early claims about the revolutionary nature of internet technologies it seems rather that we cannot be certain of the liberatory nature of such changes. Instead, we need to consider what the profusion of information means and how it is altering political relations. What we can say is that what seems to be the key political effect of these internet technologies is

again contentless; that is, any content is subject to the revision of boundaries between producer, distributor and consumer.

One area of the politics of organisation and communication affected by internet technologies, then, is exemplified by Indymedia and YouTube and relates to altered relations between producers, distributors and consumers of media objects. These changes imply many things, most obviously the potential for a democratisation of media, but they also reinforce the contentless nature of many political actions made possible by internet technologies. Expertise remains relevant to this change, for example Indymedia has had specific software written to enable its open publishing format. However, this expertise is often embedded in systems and, while it remains determining for many users, it also releases users to utilise technologies in ways that produce redrawn boundaries between produces, distributors and consumers of media-objects and sometimes provides platforms that release creators of digital media objects from technical constraints.

Beyond the changes exemplified by Indymedia and YouTube, there is a second important type of use of Internet technologies by hacktivists in relation to communication and organisation. If the first type of change we have looked at points to differences in the way the media is made and read, the second directly addresses significant changes in forms of organisation and communication. The work of Jenny Pickerill demonstrates the interest of radical groups in communication based on internet technologies and the ways that these alter forms of organisation. Pickerill's analysis of three UK-based environmental groups concluded:

> It has been illustrated that it is possible to mobilise those who are already within the movement networks (or those who cognate), using CMC without face-to-face contact. CMC is simply a quicker, cheaper and more global method of utilising these networks. More people can be contacted more quickly than through traditional forms of communication such as word of mouth and underground publications, and this contact is also on a much larger scale. (Pickerill 2001, 164.)

Pickerill's work also points out limitations, with movements retaining a high demand for face-to-face contact, though she notes that her findings

might relate to a specific historical moment because there has been a greater spread of computer-mediated communication since she completed her project. There can be little doubt that internet technologies shift forms of communication within political groups, and it may be that this shift is most easily accomplished by groups that are already committed to less hierarchical or de-centralised organisational forms. It seems that more mainstream political organisations have taken considerably longer to find uses for communication via the Internet, perhaps relating to their greater reliance on hierarchies. (Chadwick 2006,114-143.)

Despite a potential affinity between anti-hierarchical (dis)organisations and communication based on internet technologies, we should be clear that these effects are not necessarily specific to particular political ideologies. The effects are also ones that have been documented for almost as long as computer mediated communication has existed. For example, Sproull and Kiesler's 1986 research demonstrated that computer mediated discussions induced greater participation, flattened hierarchies and produced more honest discussion, while at the same time making decisions harder to reach and inducing greater levels of abuse (the now familiar flaming) (Sproull & Kiesler 1986; 1993). These are familiar aspects of online communication which are open to everyone from Greenpeace, radical anarchism or radical Islamism to communities based on leisure interests such as model train fanatics.

The general political point about internet technologies at stake here is, again, that in terms of communication the Internet produces its own informational politics which is effectively contentless when viewed against many of the major political ideologies of this and the last century. The two existing political ideologies that come closest to the anti-hierarchical and distributed communicative possibilities based on internet technologies are libertarianism and anarchism. The shared positions here are only partial, referring particularly to distributed political identities that are each taken to be the locus of political responsibility. The anti-statism of radical, particularly USA based, libertarianism is supported here but not the often concomitant belief in free markets and capitalism, which certainly has resonances but could easily be argued against with co-operative forms of social organisation. Similarly, and in a mirror image, anarchism is not wholesale at home with the communicative powers of internet technologies,

but the image of small scale, self-managed communities is resonant, though any presumption of the primacy of co-operatives falls to the same problem as the free market fancies of libertarians; things could be done differently.

Communication and organisation based on internet technologies and in activist groups resolves and confirms something that has been implicit throughout this chapter: there is a politics that results specifically from internet technologies.

Proposition Four: There is a politics of internet technologies.

We also gain some further indicators of the nature of this politics in its affinity for libertarian and anarchist ideologies. The prevalence of libertarianism among US internet activists and anarchism among European internet activists obscures, beneath profound rhetorical differences, equally profound substantive similarities in the two positions in relation to the internet. We can now see this in the way communicative practices based on internet technologies imply both libertarianism and anarchism but only partially so; that libertarians import free market ideologies and anarchists import class war ideologies lies not in the social consequences of internet-based communicative practices but in a category mistake by anarchists and libertarians.

Proposition Five: Internet technologies produce communicative practices that imply positive ethical value should rest in distributed political identities that are the locus of political responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Three figures of resistance, three types of political action on the Internet, three insights into general political processes on the Internet; three types of hacktivism have been explored and propositions about the Internet and politics derived from that exploration. It now remains to pull together these propositions into one list and then to explore if they can be refined.

Proposition One: The possibility of an Internet politics is created by the ability to mobilise expertise in the manipulation of Internet technologies.

Proposition Two: Expertise allows intervention directly into the social, cultural, economic and political infrastructures created by internet technologies.

Proposition Three: Informational politics is a politics of difference-production and not content-production.
Proposition Four: There is a politics of internet technologies.

Proposition Five: Internet technologies produce communicative practices that imply positive ethical value should rest in distributed political identities that are the locus of political responsibility.

These are specific ideas that come from exploring issues of politics in the context of internet technologies through the lens of popular political actions. Of course, popular political actions are not the only way to approach politics and the Internet, I mentioned more mainstream political parties in passing above and it seems that such organisations are becoming more involved with the kinds of political innovations internet technologies make possible. We should in this context note the importance of mobilising expertise which for grassroots politics often relies on volunteers. This may make internet-based political innovations more easily dominated, in the long run, by governments, political parties and corporations with the resources to fund the control of expertise; though here we would also need to consider the meaning of the Free Software/Open Source movement. (Weber 2004.) Such considerations point us toward a re-ordering of the propositions I have outlined, to produce a complex yet coherent definition of a politics based on internet technologies. It could not be claimed that this politics has been definitively established; rather that it offers a basis for future analysis, research and argument.

Proposition Four is the blanket statement. While I have derived a politics that seems particular to internet technologies, it remains the case to establish this formally, something likely to require comparative research. To those researching the Internet such a claim of

the specificity of political innovations based on internet technologies might seem obvious; after all, not only are the effects of the Internet widespread they, in examples like Indymedia and YouTube, seem to produce obvious novelty. Yet the claim that there is a specific politics that is only produced when internet technologies are involved is the kind of statement that needs testing against 'real world' politics. It is certainly also a statement that should not be taken to mean that the Internet is an entirely separate place to something we call offline life. Rather, the claim would be that when internet technologies are involved then a particular political formation comes into play, how that formation operates will depend on its relations to other formations that are present in particular political moments. Offline and online here become convenient shorthands for political formations which need to be untangled and separated to be better understood, the present argument should not however be understood as an argument for an ontological separation.

Within this overall framework, the remaining propositions seem to me to cohere into a definition of the specificity of a politics that operates within social and cultural norms that are dependant on internet technologies. When exploring the definition offered below, a conclusive disproof of it does not consist in pointing out that many of the elements of it might be found in non-internet contexts. Rather what is key is the weight and quality of these elements rather than a determinedly negative, and ultimately intellectually futile, reading in which, for example, it was claimed because there is expertise at work in politics both in online and offline that there is no difference between the two. If we look back at the arguments and examples offered above the specificity being claimed here is not that expertise is important in internet politics and is unimportant in non-internet politics but rather that internet politics is dependent on expertise and this expertise enables intervention into the infrastructure of the 'world'. This is not a matter of political events but of creating the very possibility that certain types of events are capable of occurring: expertise is in this sense central to the politics I am outlining. My conclusion is that exploring radical politics that is consonant with internet technologies leads to the following understanding:

There is a politics specific to social worlds built on internet technologies. This politics:

- is created, altered and maintained by the ability to mobilise expertise in the manipulation of internet technologies;
- is able to intervene directly into the infrastructure that enables social worlds dependant on internet technologies;
- is one of difference-production, it is a modular and tactical politics available for use by all ideologies except an ideology that restrains the production of further differences, and;
- presumes, produces and valorises distributed political identities that are each the site of political responsibility.

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SIGRID BARINGHORST

The political empowerment of citizen consumers – opportunities and problems of anti-corporate campaigning on the net

JONAH PERETTI'S EMAIL EXCHANGE WITH NIKE – A CYBERMYTH OF POLITICAL CONSUMERISM?

On January 5, 2001, Jonah Peretti, then assistant adjunct professor at New York University, wrote an email to Nike corporation in response to the company's invitation to consumers to express their lifestyle identity by giving the company design recommendations. "..(*A*)*ll they were really doing was sending instructions to cheap labour in developing countries*" (Peretti 2004, 128), Peretti thought and ironically ordered a pair of Nikes with the word "sweatshop" stitched onto them. By using the same online service that Nike used to strengthen its brand image for creating an illusion of consumer participation and personal freedom he tried to redirect the company's PR-tools against itself. The following dialogue with the customer service of Nike ended with Peretti's mocking request: "*Could you please send me a colour snapshot of the ten-year-old Vietnamese girl who makes my shoes*?" He emailed his little culture-jamming discussion to about twelve friends who emailed it to their peers and like a snowball virus, the exchange was soon replicated a million times (ibid., 129). At the end of January 2001, the first traditional media outlet, the San Jose Mercury News, published a report of the humorous story and soon afterwards, Time, Village Voice and The Wall Street Journal and even several European papers like The Guardian, La Repubblica and Liberation followed suit. The show NBC Today invited Peretti to discuss corporate social

responsibility on national US television with a representative from Nike (ibid., 136).

The symbolic attack of the culture jammer and netizen consumer Jonah Peretti on the self proclaimed corporate citizen Nike Corporation has not only received much mass media resonance. His brave and successful confrontation of a giant corporation is also widely referred to in academic literature when the potential of the internet for the mobilisation of political consumerism in general is discussed. On the one hand, I will argue in this paper that his provocative action is rightly quoted that often, as it represents many aspects of a new kind of political action that is politicising the sphere of consumption as part of a wider global justice movement. On the other hand, however, I will show that taking the resonance of his email exchange as representative for cyberactivism and the dynamic interrelation between micro, middle, and macro media (Peretti 2004) in the field of political consumerism in general would be mystifying the actual realisation of the participative potential of net communication. In terms of average use of the interactive possibilities that net technology offers, empirical evidence is – at least as far as the analysis of websites of German-speaking anti-corporate protest actors shows – far less impressive than the often praised example of Jonah Peretti suggests.

The chapter comprises three parts: First, some general elements of political consumerism are characterised based on the case of Jonah Peretti. After that, the politicisation of consumption is contextualised and explained as a new form of political participation. In that respect several systemic and cultural changes are examined that can be regarded as structural and cultural opportunity formations of political consumerism as a social movement. The third and main part of the chapter discusses the internet as a new and ambivalent technological opportunity structure for the political empowerment of consumers. On the one hand, it has provided companies with sophisticated new means of online branding and mass customisation[1] leading to an illusion of participation and the empowerment of consumers, as the case of the

1. Mass customization in marketing, manufacturing, and management, is the use of flexible computer-aided manufacturing systems to produce custom output. Those systems combine the low unit costs of mass production processes with the flexibility of individual customization. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_customization)

aforementioned service offer of Nike has shown. On the other hand, new ICTs have provided consumers with new efficient means for the collective production of knowledge that can be used to enhance the market power of consumers as well as their influence as civil society actors. While contrary to traditional mass media the internet allows for many-to-many communication and thus provides a significant media infrastructure for the strengthening of network-based participatory politics, it is argued that the logic of political campaigning, most of all determined by the need to arouse mass media attention, limits a full realisation of this potential. Netizen consumers are far less engaged in discursive cultural practices than the communicative structure of new media allows for. Apart from that, NGO-centred action networks still outnumber direct activist networks merely based on internet communication.

CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL CONSUMERISM

To what extent is the Nike sweatshop email exchange characteristic of the new movement of political consumerism in general?

- Mobilising for political aims by appealing to the power of con sumers lacks strong and complex grand narratives and corresponds with a general tendency of deideologisising politics in general as protest politics in particular (Bennett, 2004; Micheletti, 2003). The anti-sweatshop movement that Peretti's action is related to as well as campaigns against price dumping and the exploitation of employees of discounters like Walmart in the US, Tesco in the UK, or Lidl in Germany or the boycott of genetically modified food do not draw their legitimacy from fixed grand narratives but from normatively rather general discourses on the violation of global social rights. In social movement research, framing of consumerist action is called ideologically "relaxed" (Bennett) and based on "flexible identities" (Tarrow & della Porta 2005). Given a rather broad understanding of global social rights a very wide range of issues of new and old social movements are connected. Their diversity ranges from human rights issues, women's issues,

issues of fair trade and collective organisation of workers to issues of ecological sustainability(cf. Introduction; Häyhtiö & Rinne in this volume). In its focus on social dumping and workers' rights political consumerism bears some resemblance to old anti-capitalist movements; however, the most significant difference is the shift of focus away from the sphere of production as the prime realm of mobilisation to the sphere of distribution and consumption in order to scandalise injustices of production in a more lifeworld-oriented mode and thus allowing the anti-corporate movement to appear to be closer to humanitarian early socialist ideas than to Marxist theories of socialism. Contrary to both, the old labour movement and new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, current political consumerism in Europe is neither simply anti-capitalistic nor anti-consumerist, nor simply based on working-class or middle-class actors. If there is any master frame at all, it can neither be described as solely materialistic in the sense of Marxist nor anti-imperialistic or solely postmaterialistic in the sense of Ronald Inglehardt. It is rather a new synthesis of both: a reframing of working-class issues like workers' rights – fair pay, humane working conditions and the right to collectively organise – in a global dimension linked in with middle-class "lifestyle politics" (Bennett) of ethical consumption.

- Mobilising the power of consumers has a long tradition particularly in the US and other Anglo-Saxon societies. Consumerist action repertoires comprise most of all collective actions like boycotts or buycotts (e.g. fair trade products). Current attempts to appeal to consumer agency in order to evoke changes of corporate policies differ from similar mobilisations in the 19th and early 20th centuries in that they are less marketplace-oriented and more discursive and media-oriented (Friedman 1999, 45-62). While marketplace-oriented action presupposes the mobilisation of a large number of "foot soldiers to staff the boycott picket lines at the entrances to retail stores" (ibid., 51) media-oriented actions have a much lower demand on political participation. As long as campaigners know how to stage protest effectively in the media, protest action requires only a few – or in the case of Jonah Peretti just one – activist.

- "No logo" – the title of Naomi Klein's bestseller expresses the particular anti-branding focus of political consumerist action. Transnationally operating corporations are the main targets of transnational consumer activists that scandalise global social norm violations (Evans 2000, 231). Brands offer a particularly well suited target for critical consumers "as they are trendsetters of world economy" (Werner & Weiss 2004, 47). Corporations are being held responsible for most of the injustices caused by economic globalisation. Attacking the brand image of a large transnational corporation (also called "brand bashing") has become the most prominent aim of consumerist protest because of "new cognitive burdens" on marketplace-oriented actors. Sizeable transnational corporations have many subsidiaries that market their own products under many different brand names. The boycott of Nestlé in the 1970s has already shown how difficult it is to execute a successful boycott against a company whose goods and services were sold under many different brand labels. As a result, it is easier to damage the umbrella brand by symbolic action than to boycott all the goods manufactured by one company.
- Resulting from the focus on media-oriented actions against well known brands, the framing of political consumerist campaigns follows a binary coded structure of moral communication. The economic power of ruthless corporate giants is confronted with moral superiority, creativity, humour, dedication and the courage of powerless advocates for a global ethic – a David versus Goliath action structure. The extraordinary attention that particularly the Adbusters Magazine or other acts of culture jamming receive is caused by this charming combination of avantgardistic humorous practices of "uncooling" brand images with "uncommercials" and a highly moral aim of freeing the public from the dominance of commercial icons. "We will take on the archetypal mind polluters – Marlboro, Budweiser, Benetton, Coke, McDonald's and Calvin Klein- and beat them at their own game. …On the rubble of the old media culture, we will build a new one with a non commercial heart and soul." (Adbusters Media Manifesto)
- As the case of Jonah Peretti illustrates political consumerism is far less collectivistic than former social movement activities.

Support action like writing standardised electronic protest mails to scandalised corporations or boycotting certain brands is easy to integrate in everyday shopping practice and thus follows the general trend of individualisation and "Veralltäglichung" of political protest that Dieter Rucht considers to be characteristic of changes of political protest culture of recent decades. The low costs and threshold of participation in politics of the shopping basket help to avoid problems of free-rider-actions as well as a burn-out of activists. Consumer citizenship reflects a general trend of political participation characterised by an increasing retreat from public to private life by politicising private lifestyle decisions and thus demarcating the traditional dividing line of public and political life (Micheletti 2003, 24). Apart from that, taking political issues into account when taking decisions on consumption presupposes no strong shared collective identity. A moral case-related contextual identity is sufficient, based on weak ties among members of an action network. Members do not have to meet and develop strong emotional bonds or community feelings. The images of scandalised brands serve – aside from the image of the main scandalising NGO advocacy networks or direct activist networks – usually as the sole provider of collective identity among protesting citizen consumers (c.f. Häyhtiö & Rinne in this volume).

- Another feature that Jonah Peretti's email exchange reveals lies in the crucial importance of internet-based network-like social relations among supporters. Ideally these networks mirror the transnational network structure of the giant corporations attacked. There are two main types of transnational networks (Bennett 2005, 213-216): First, "transnational advocacy networks" (Keck & Sikkink 1998) aim at linking actors from developing countries with more empowered actors in the so-called First World, assuming that they have greater influence on the dynamic of the global economy. Organisational coalitions connect diverse working-class and middle-class based civil society organisations: most of all trade unions, church groups, North- and South-NGOs. NGO-centred issue networks are usually rather homogenous. They share a common action frame advocating mostly single

protest issues, deploy fracture lines along their organisational identity, and restrict members influence on strategic decisions (cf. Mosca in this volume). Secondly, loose polycentric direct activist networks are structured by weak ties, relying – like Peretti's protest against Nike illustrates – most of all on new ICTs for collective self-organisation. They are considered to be characteristic of the Global Justice Movement targeting WTO, IMF or large corporations. They advocate multiple issues and pursue goals of individual empowerment and spread across diverse networks. A mixed type of network combines elements of both, for instance, the campaign against Coca Cola, where a network-centred on the transnational NGO Greenpeace cooperates with more direct Adbusters activists. Despite their different social structure and ideological background, in employing consumerist action repertoires all types of networks address a new agent of social and political change: the citizen as ethical consumer, a consumer who is offered the opportunity to articulate preferences and to pressure companies to accept and act according to their first choice.

SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES OF POLITICAL CONSUMERISM

Having roughly described the main aims and general mode of political participation of political consumerism, I would now like to discuss in more detail the socio-economic and cultural background of this new social movement before highlighting in more depth the particular relevance of the internet for its success.[2] Therefore, I would like to draw on an explanatory approach developed by Cohen and Arato. In their discussion of the blind spots of social movement paradigms, Cohen and Arato plead for an understanding of new social movements that combines elements of both approaches. Following the Habermasian interaction theory, they propose a "dualistic conception of society" (Cohen & Arato 1990, 531) along the Habermasian distinction between system and lifeworld. While their intention is to conceptualise a frame that is able to analyse the strategically rational dimension as well as

2. For the following also see Baringhorst 2005 and 2006.

the expressive and aesthetic element of collective action in general, in the following, the system/lifeworld distinction is taken as an analytical frame to typify the particular historical background of the rise of the current transnational political consumerism movement.

With regard to changes on the system level that have contributed to the increasing social and political empowerment of consumers we have to distinguish between political and economic structural changes.

CHANGES ON THE SYSTEM LEVEL: NEW STRUCTURES OF GOVERNANCE AND THE GROWING POWER OF TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

Political opportunity factors for the mobilisation of consumer power result most of all from new structures of governance. The acceleration of processes of modernisation and the increasing complexity of social and ecological problems reduces the capacity of governments to regulate effectively within the borders of the nation state. Political problems are regulated more or less co-ordinately on different territorial levels in different functional sectors and networks of actors and with varying degrees of liability. Changing governing structures have increased the impact of NGOs in international politics. The generally grown credibility, public resonance and political consulting role of transnational NGOs is also benefiting single NGOs and protest action networks campaigning for global social rights, human rights or ecological rights by scandalising product histories and aiming at changing consumer awareness and preferences.[3]

Power in the traditional sense of Max Weber is understood as the chance to force ones will upon others. The new power of global economic players, however, is not based on violence as the ultimate ratio, like state power. It is much more mobile than the power of the state and globally deployable. The threatening potential of transnational corporations reduces the possible options to a single one: the option

3. As, for instance, the role of NGOs in the Global Compact Initiative of the United Nations shows, new structures of global governance give them increased options to influence global regulations and to pressurise transnational corporations or national governments in case of global norm violations.

to say no, not to invest and not to be held publicly accountable for entrepreneurial decisions.

According to Beck (2002) the structural change of economic power has made political consumerism the only counter-power left to confront global capitalism. Consumer power is like capitalist power based on a single negative power resource. In the case of consumer power it is the option not to buy, not to buy a scandalised product or all products from a scandalised company or disdained country or all products of a scandalised mode of production. Shopping power and consumer choice can be mobilised to become a global citizenship action, organised and communicated by civil society organisations, and it can be converted into ballot votes affecting the politics of companies, independent of the boundaries of state territories. The crucial power resource of political consumerism lies in the fact that companies are usually powerless when confronted with consumer boycotts or other collective actions by consumer citizens, because even the most powerful transnational companies cannot dismiss their consumers like they can dismiss workers.[4] Companies can leave particular places of production but they cannot withdraw from a globalised market. The costs of exerting influence through consumer choice, however, are low as consumers can usually opt for alternative products of similar quality and similar prices.

CHANGES ON THE LEVEL OF LIFEWORLD: BRANDING OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

Apart from these processes of structural transformation, changes on the cultural level of everyday life practices of consumers favour a politicisation of consumption in order to scandalise violations of human rights. In this context we have to particularly mention the growing relevance of consumption for individual and collective formations of identities. Consumer resistance in terms of anti-corporate campaigning is only one expression of an overall increased consumer agency that is deeply connected with the grown symbolic power of corporate brands.

4. With the exception of highly qualified workers with professions of high international demand who can also choose the exit-option.

Individualisation and changes in collective identity formation shape the cultural background of augmented social and cultural importance of all matters of consumption, giving particular importance to brand names and the symbolic construction of lifestyles in commercial marketing (Bennett 2003, 22). While ideological discourses have lost much of their former influence over identity formation in Western societies, lifestyle has become a highly significant element of individual and collective identity construction. Ideological politics has been transformed to a large extent to "lifestyle politics" (Bennett), attaching political meaning to the cultural scenes and milieus we live in, the dress code we choose, the music we listen to, or in general, the goods we consume. The images of goods, most markedly expressed in powerful images of global icons of consumer brands, have become decisive elements of identity building, most of all in affluent Western societies.

The use-value of consumer goods thus is more than their response to extra-social needs and pleasures but results from their "*ability to be deployed within productive consumer practice*." (Arvidsson 2006, 20) Brands are on the one hand means of capitalist domination of media culture and mediated lifeworlds of consumers. On the other hand, they only provide a context or a "brandscape" (ibid., 2006, 15) "*where the autonomous productivity of co-workers is made to unfold in a particular direction, towards the creation of particular, valuable forms of meaning and social relations*." Consumers are not merely passive objects of media domination and brand marketing but we have to conceive of them as creative and productive consumer agents. Consumers use goods as well as mediated brands as means for their everyday performance of community, identity, solidarity and emotional bonds, in general. Branding, product placement, event marketing, sponsorship or other forms of marketing all aim at involving consumers in their co-creation, they try to control what consumers do with the brands, how they interpret them and employ them in everyday practices. However, these techniques of control are far from perfect. As consumer acts are reflexive and dependent on a conscious approval by customers of the product, the approval of a product or company can be withdrawn any time consumers change their minds. The augmented symbolic load of goods has created a demand well above the level of existential

needs and objective use-value. At the same time consumer choices are increasingly vulnerable to disappointment and questioned as to whether they might not have been the right choices, especially given the multitude of offers of alternative goods of comparable quality and price. This increased reflexivity of consumption represents the strength and weakness of Western consumer societies: the precondition for a virtually endless market expansion as well as the option to opt out and to introduce ecological, human rights and social justice issues into the sphere of distribution.

ICT AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF CONSUMERS

The structural and lifeworld-related cultural explanations for the rise of political consumerism are both deeply connected to a third level of justification that is the changed media infrastructure as a most relevant technological opportunity structure. This interdependency between the development of political activism and media technology is far from new. Benedict Anderson has pointed out the great importance of the invention of printing techniques for processes of nation building which has offered the opportunity to generate abstract communities and form solidarity and collective identities beyond face-to-face communication. While due to its one-to-many communicative structure the mass media could only shape these abstract communities in terms of top-down communication, new digital ICTs facilitate horizontal communication in conceptual communities and allow for the operation of complex social interactions and the technical opportunity to connect various modes of mediated communication. Based on its multifaceted communicative structure, it has a huge potential to aggregate individual interests and allow for an individualist and network-related mode of political participation based on one-to-many as well as many-to-one and many-to-many modes of communication. (See also Mosca; Rättilä, Paltemaa; Häyhtiö & Rinne and Gillan in this volume)

In the following, I would like to discuss the particular impact of online communication on the development of consumer agency and political consumerism as a social movement. The core question is: To what extent has the internet contributed or weakened the empower-

ment of consumers? The answer will be ambivalent: On the one hand, digitalised media culture provides a productive infrastructure for the creation of brandspaces that increase the advancement of commercial branding into the lifeworld of consumers. On the other hand, digital media also provides protest actors with a technology that facilitates attempts at critical deconstruction of branded communication. In that respect, the empowerment of consumer groups and NGOs to put pressure on corporations is closely related to the increased importance of information technology and cognitive competences for industrial capitalism, which leads to a new formation of the capitalist economy that has also been called "informational capitalism" (Dyer-Witheford 1999), "digital capitalism" (Schiller 1999) or "cognitive capitalism" (Moulier Boutang 2002).

ONLINE BRANDING – THE ILLUSION OF EMPOWERMENT OF CONSUMERS

Many internet enthusiasts have argued in the 1990s that new digital media represent the technological embodiment of the "cultures of freedom" of the 1960s and 1970s and that they will generate and strengthen new forms of non-hierarchical political participation. This is the case to a certain extent, as I will describe later on. However, the internet also has an unprecedented potential to influence opinion and particularly consumer opinion through online branding and marketing due to the plasticity and malleability of content (Manchovic 2001, 27) that digital media allow for.

Online computer games or dating agencies are only two examples of the new levels of intimacy and openness that internet-based communication provides and that are increasingly employed by corporate actors for all kinds of branding, product placement and immersion of users into pre-structured brandscapes. The internet can, as Arvidsson argues, create commercial environments that encompass all human senses centred around and all actions anticipated by the programme of a particular brand. In informational capitalism "*ICTs have the technological potential to complete the real subsumption of life under capital,*

to the extent that the becoming of subjectivity and the becoming of value coincide" (Arvidsson 2006, 96).

Online brand management has become an important new element of marketing, aimed at strengthening the status of corporate brands by generating a community-like interaction between consumers. Thus members of the community of book lovers created by Amazon are encouraged to write reviews and share their book recommendations and eBay-users rate each other and thus create a relation of mutual trust as well as trust in the company by providing the environment for community formation. New modes of online marketing offer consumers new options to participate in the process of production in order to strengthen their emotional and interactive relations to the brand even more. They are even asked to take part in the planning of product design, an option of interactivity that has been shrewdly used contra-intentionally by Jonah Peretti's attempt to mock Nike's online communication and order invitation.[5] However, if it comes to use the offered communicative space for messages deconstructing company images, the implicit limitations of consumer participation are soon made crystal clear as not only Peretti's email-exchange illustrates. When the action network Attac tried to sell the anti-product N.I.X. Version 11.04 via eBay on Buy-Nothing-Day, eBay stopped the auction of the extraordinary product once the bids of potential buyers reached 150 Euro. While Attac Germany perceived this mock-auction as an art-action and N.I.X. Version 11.04 as an art-product, eBay Community Watch explained its actions by emphasising its responsibility to safeguard the seriousness of its online business. eBay, they argued, would not be the right place for fundraising.[6]

5. Other examples are car manufacturers (e.g. Audi, Volvo, and Peugeot) who ask potential consumers to give their ideas on the development of future models.
6. "Hallo! Angebote sind nicht der richtige Ort fuer Spendengesuche und ebay ist es darueberhinaus auch nicht moeglich die Seriositaet derartiger Aufrufe zu ueberpruefen und einzuschaetzen. Der Inhalt von Angebotsbeschreibungen sollte auf eine Beschreibung des angebotenen Artikels beschraenkt sein. Mit freundlichen Gruessen, eBay Community Watch" http://buynothingday.narra.de/bnd.php?page=bnd2004_ebay

The given examples reveal an increased opportunity of brand marketing to reach consumers and entice them to interact with other consumers in a community-like mode as well as with the company directly. Apart from the company-controlled modes of consumer interaction, the internet has at the same time increased consumer agency by providing easy access to market-related information.

The internet is an extremely efficient means for the collective production of knowledge and other immaterial values like communities and collective identities as well as a useful retrieval device for all kinds of information. Low transaction costs combined with free and ubiquitous information have, in particular contributed to strengthening the social position of consumers relative to vendors or marketers. Vendors lose their information monopoly and are thus forced to lower prices and improve the quality of goods and services. In a similar argument the British political communication expert Margaret Scammell has summed up the impact of ICT on political consumerism as "re-writing the rules of the marketplace". "*The consumer is offered a considerably expanded choice. Digital deregulated markets lower the costs of entry for new producers and substantially reduce, or make irrelevant, barriers of time and space*" (Scammell 2003, 5).

However, if we only praise the increase of consumer information and interactive engagement as such, we ignore that much of the information that consumers produce on and retrieve from the net is created in a highly commercialised environment. In the German speaking virtual realm, for instance, information on products and services provided by commercial portals like www.dooyoo.de; www.ciao.de; www.yopi.de which provide customer ratings and opinions are far from being favourable net contexts for enhancing consumer netizenship and online political discourse on consumption. On these portals users comment on goods and services that they have already bought. Thus it is unlikely that they will reflect on issues of production and labour conditions or environment protection implications afterwards (Bieber & Lamla 2005). Apart from that the commercial context of these web-portals consists of price ratings and online shops with virtual shopping baskets and thus discourages the political activation of users. Even in terms of generating trustworthy

consumer opinions there is often no overall operative control that could guarantee the trustworthiness of postings. How can users be sure that these portals are not misused by retailers who negatively criticise offers of competitors and recommend their own goods and services?

Consumer protection is another important element of consumer empowerment. According to the neo-corporatist structure of consumer protection in Germany, it is mainly provided by independent state funded organisations like for instance the Bundesverband der Verbraucherzentralen (vzbw). Websites are mainly top-down information sites and offer little chances for political participation. There are some changes ongoing due to the general transformation of the state from an authoritatively organised state to a cooperative and or activating state. In more recent times, ideas of sustainable consumption have even had an influence on the consumer policy of state funded consumer organisation as well as in ministerial PR. The German government for instance has launched campaigns under the slogan "Echt gerecht –clever kaufen" (really fair – buy cleverly) and "fair feels good" (Kneip & Niesyto 2007). Like the websites of state-funded consumer organisations the empowerment of consumer agency through government websites is primarily based on one-way-communication and pseudo participation: Multiple-choice-tests are offered to reflect one's own consumer behaviour, or an online library provides information on consumer issues. Much of this information from consumer organisations and government sites is directed at journalists, politicians or academics and not at individual consumers (Bieber & Lamla 2005).

THE NETIZEN CONSUMER – POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF CONSUMERS ON THE NET

In a commercialised media culture most mass media are dependent on advertising revenues and thus reluctant to support criticism against their financial supporters. As they are often part of transnational corporations they cannot be expected to be particularly objective in reporting on anti-corporate criticism. Internet and direct street action thus is still much more powerful in providing the arena for anti-corporate protest. The asymmetry between consumers and vendors is

not simply reversed by the plethora of information that consumers produce on and retrieve from the net. Given the seemingly endless stream of information on the net, independent filters and sources of trustworthiness are needed in order to enable consumers to use this information for a political empowerment of consumer agency. Independent and trustworthy agencies of evaluation, interpretation and complexity reduction are indispensable. So far, civil society actors, like most non-governmental organisations and action networks are the only collective actors represented on the net that have the resources and competences to fulfil these functions. In that respect the often mentioned individualisation of political protest and the identification of the Global Justice Movement with direct activist networks ignores the great relevance of non-governmental organisations in the political consumerism movement, be it as single organisational actors or as part of more or less extended action networks. Even if they are not always generating first-hand knowledge on companies, their product histories and qualities, they function as major gatekeepers of critical opinion formation for the ethical consumer citizens.[7]

Campaign websites often give extensive background facts on company policies as well as numerous links for further information requests. While objective reports on norm violation of private companies are limited by the indirect or sometimes even direct influence of private business on commercial media, net-based information resources have the chance to challenge brand images by highlighting the dark side of production and consumption. NGO and campaign websites serve as documentation centres and archives providing alternative information for journalists, multipliers, teachers as well as activists and individual consumers (c.f. Mosca in this volume). Usually they function as pull media; information has to be searched for and asked for, but subscribers are also informed on a more regular basis by newsletters and mailing lists (c.f. Gillan and Lehtonen in this volume).By providing critical information on corporate production and PR practices these

7. The most relevant websites of political consumerist NGOs and NGO-networks are for instance: www.corpwatch.org; www.sweatshopwatch.org; www.globalwitness.org; www.prwatch.org; www.endgame.org; www.multinationalmonitor.org; www.ethicalconsumer.org; www.oeko.investvest.com; www.transnationale.org; www.maketradefair.com.

websites fulfil – apart from the task of simple information – a significant watchdog and orientation function. They monitor the activities of corporations and interpret the information provided according to their overall mission statements. By structuring information in top news and background news as well as in news on certain branches of industry or on certain moral issues or particular corporate activities they present significant cognitive maps that help users to avoid information overload and cognitive disorientation.

Apart from that, anti-corporate websites display many similarities with their commercial counterparts: Appealing to the growing demand for entertainment and distraction they not only offer serious news on scandalised companies, they also attract users' attention through entertaining elements like quizzes and comics strips and similar devices. In terms of service provision, they offer advice for supporters of their moral claims like instructions on how to organise a local picket line, a street theatre performance and other campaigning strategies. Above all, they complement their moral and strategic advice with anti-corporate goods; selling books, posters, CDs and other merchandising that would support their resource mobilisation.

Providing alternative information is indispensable for the political empowerment of consumers and also a crucial function of social movements. However, there are several other functions that have to be fulfilled by NGOs in order to promote successful campaigns against scandalised corporations and in order to develop and sustain a social movement of critical consumers. Christian Lahusen has pointed out several functions (Lahusen 1996) as structurally essential for successful transnational campaigns. These functions can be taken as reference points for an evaluation of the potential as well as the realisation of the potential of the internet for political consumerism as a social movement, as this movement hardly exists apart from a series of transnational campaigns against the norm violations of corporations and branches of corporations.

The functions that have to be fulfilled by successful movement organisations are:

1. The development of organised action programmes based on the strategic planning of interaction between conflict actors and the coordination of collective action.
2. Focusing public attention on selected issues and generating public pressure through moralisation and protest dramatisation oriented towards the news factors of mass media news production.
3. The generation and stabilisation of action networks through resource mobilisation, means of political participation, and the mobilisation of collective identities among supporters.
4. Vertical integration, i.e. the coordination and linkage of diverse spatial dimensions of action through the integration of local, regional, national and global actors and arenas.
5. Horizontal integration of polycentric networks, i.e. cooperation with actors in diverse social subsystems like mass media, politics, economics and science.

As much research is still needed to give empirically valid evidence on the role of ICTs concerning these different functions, only some of the problems connected with the contributions of internet communication to these functions are highlighted. Much literature on new ICTs and protest politics focuses on the quality of political participation in net based social movements and on the character of protest networks, especially the geographical scope of networks as well as the quality of ties connecting members of networks. The normative reference point of evaluating the impact of digital communication on political participation and network structures is usually a Habermasian notion of participative or deliberative democracy (Bohman 2004). The relevance of these normative perspectives not disputed, in the following, attention is focussed on a less normative and more functionalist frame of evaluation. By discussing the potential contribution of the internet for the above mentioned functional requirements of successful transnational protest campaigns, the particular tension between a mass media-related campaign logic and a network logic that results from the network structure of protest organisations and their aim to enhance political participation of campaign supporters is highlighted. This tension characterises all protest campaigns launched and supported by civil society actors. On the one hand, civil society actors want to

attract a wide public awareness which is usually only realised through mass media attention and they aspire to put pressure on powerful corporations and/or governmental actors. On the other hand, they want to incorporate many citizens in collective action and organise their actions according to egalitarian and democratic norms as they are characteristic of the self-definition of civil society actors. While the internet, it is argued, supports the network logic by facilitating a more decentralised, egalitarian and direct participation, the success of political consumerist collective action also depends on a campaign logic that requires a more centralist approach to politics, aiming at a mass media audience based on the mobilising power of large, professionalised and well known protest actors.

As far as the first function is concerned, the development of organised action programmes based on strategic planning of interaction between conflict actors and the coordination of collective action, it is obvious that it asks for a rather centralist attitude towards protest action. The net is helpful as intranet and email communication reduce the transaction costs of campaign organisers: communication is cheap, fast and collective action can be organised by a top-down circulation of dates, places and modes of collective protest action. Protest actors can strategically use accelerated communication processes to improve conflict dramatisation and put attacked adversaries under pressure. Opponents of anti-corporate protest are usually powerful corporations. In order to place them in a defensive position and outmanoeuvre their PR machines, protest action has to be planned secretly and not talked about in net forums and mailing lists that are already part of the everyday observation procedure of large companies.[8] Companies are learning quickly and adapt to changes of collective action repertoires.

8. In Germany, an often cited example of the power of the net as a tactic weapon is the blockade of the Lufthansa website organised by the Deportation-Class-Campaign, the "Tag für den Kranich" (the Day for the Crane") which was launched by a network called "Kein Mensch ist illegal" (No Human Being is illegal) consisting of antiracist groups and the prisoners help organisation Libertad in order to raise public attention on the contribution of airlines to the inhuman treatment of asylum seekers. The action was successful in so far as it was supported by 150 organisations, unions and NGOs. 13.000 participants partially blockaded the possibility of ordering Lufthansa flights on the net for two hours during the shareholder assembly on 20 June, 2001. However, due to the fact that the action plan was known by Lufthansa beforehand it was able to take preventive action to limit the damage.

Many of them already have dark websites in their virtual drawers in order to be able to respond immediately to any anti-corporate attack by giving counter-information. As conflict opponents become ever more professional in monitoring all kinds of net communication in order to anticipate criticism and political consumerism action, successful protest campaigning can hardly afford to fully use the participative potential of the net and discuss action plans among a wide range of participants. Thus, despite the fact that the net structurally enables a more egalitarian approach to action planning, the necessity of successful campaigning limits the realisation of this potential.

The second function mentioned, the focusing of public attention on selected issues and generating public pressure through moralisation and protest dramatisation oriented towards the news factors of mass media news production, is running against the more decentralised and egalitarian network logic of the internet. Although it has to be noted that independent media platforms like Indymedia as well as websites of known anti-corporate advocacy networks or single NGOs have become relevant sources of information for journalists, they usually only shift into focus after an action network has successfully gained mass media attention due to direct action in the physical realm of high streets and shopping centres. An analysis of a more recent and still running campaign against the discounter Lidl in Germany illustrates the difficulties for large heterogeneous action networks to communicate their diverse messages to a mass media operating on the selective filters of news factors, most of all by the need to provide strong visuals. The discounter Lidl is scandalised on the one hand by the German services union ver.di, on the other hand by the action network Attac Germany, WEED, the farmers' organisation Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft, e.V., BanaFair, a fair trade campaign, and Aktion Selbstbesteuerung e.V., an organisation for self-taxation. When it comes to gaining mass media attention, this diverse coalition of union, global justice actors, environmentalists and farmers is highly asymmetrical in its media representation. After one year of protest campaigning, campaigners from Attac admit in an internal evaluation that they had great difficulties in getting their messages across to the mass media. Journalists widely reported on the dismal working conditions scandalised by the services union, but

hardly mentioned the global social and environmental issues added by the advocacy action network to the frame propagated by the unions. Although the internet facilitates cooperation among a wide range of network organisations, successful framing still demands an internal power structure, a hierarchy that allows for mass media concentration on one or only a few protest representatives and messages (Baringhorst & Kneip & Niesyto 2007).[9]

However, gaining mass media attention in order to put ruthless and unethical companies in the public pillory is not the only strategic intention of political consumerist campaigns. They do not only publicise political criticism of scandalised companies, but often aim at forcing managers to enter a dialogue with consumer groups on their production or distribution practices (Mark-Ungericht 2003). To what extent the internet helps to develop this more discursive approach to political protest is still unclear. Campaign organisers can pressurise company representatives and force them to react by simply spreading critical background information on environmental production risks or poor working conditions on the net, on campaign websites or on weblogs and by encouraging campaign supporters to spread critical facts on chats, forums, weblogs or by writing protest emails to the company. In all these forms of action, internet and email can be extremely helpful. While mass media communication tends to strengthen binary moral coding and thus encourages either boycotts or buycotts, more discursive forms of conflict interaction are very difficult to communicate via television or even print media. Due to the opportunity to convey long and differentiated reports and comments on the net it enables netizens to develop more dialogue oriented forms of interaction. However, when it comes to direct communication with the scandalised company, face-to-face communication still seems to be essential in order to create the basis of trust necessary for a fruitful dialogue.

While the first two functional requirements of successful campaigning speak in favour of a more hierarchical and professional cam-

9. A similar tension between network structure and mass media requirements characterises the current controversy in the World Social Forum movement, which has resisted the demand from mass media to speak with only one voice instead of many voices down to the present day. (Civil Society Yearbook 2005.)

paign organisation the third, fourth, and sixth function ask for a more participatory protest culture that could greatly benefit from internet and email. Although technically, political participation could be more easily facilitated by using the internet, not all civil society organisations and action networks make use of this new participatory means in the same way. Mario Diani suggested a useful distinction concerning resource mobilisation strategies between organisations or – we could add – action networks that rely on "professional resources" and those that rely more on "participatory resources" (Diani 2001, 122f.). Organisations with a strong grassroots-orientation are usually organised less hierarchically and thus, could benefit more from digital communication technology to improve internal communication and participation. Organisations that are – like Greenpeace – more hierarchically structured and that ask little more from its members than membership fees and donations are less likely to discuss action programmes with members.

On the campaign websites analysed in a research project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG)[10] many protest actors provide a plethora of means of participation. Activism is promoted by providing campaign kits, online handbooks and activism guides, and daily updates on events. Consumer netizens are encouraged to download information, to sample fliers, to subscribe to newsletters, to sign standardised electronic petitions or to write standardised protest emails. While all these forms of action reproduce a rather asymmetrical relationship between campaign organisers and supporters there are also various modes of participation that contribute to a more symmetrical structure of protest action. In that respect, individual contributions to consumer guides and to databases on goods, services and companies are interesting means of strengthening the active participation of supporters. The German branch of Greenpeace has, for instance, established an "EinkaufsNetz" (shopping net) where users were invited to register as "Gendetektiv" (gene detectives), market activists or cyberactivists. German foodwatch offers a similar chance to build up consumer agency by asking users to guard and patrol shelves in supermarkets and report their findings to the organisation under Regalpatrouille@

10. For more information on the research project see www.protest-cultures.uni-siegen.de

foodwatch.de. Cyberactivists within political consumerism are not necessarily only market activists.[11]

As net communication has become more and more visual, political consumerist campaigns also increasingly make use of digital photos documenting the operations of companies as well as protest actions. The extensive documentation of mass media resonance on campaign websites serves a significant motivational function, indicating to users the growing relevance of the moral issue they are supporting as well as giving credibility and attributing capability to campaign organisers. Visual or even audio-visual documentation plays a significant role in the rather difficult process of collective identity formation in the movement. The more campaigns become permanent and institutionalised, the more they rely on the continuous support of protest actors, and thus the more they need at least some sort of emotional bonding or collective identity among supporters. Within political consumerism, these bonds are constantly reproduced by the dramatisation of the moral failings of the companies accused and by focussing symbolic protest action on parodying and deconstructing the corporate brand. Thus the identity of campaign supporters significantly relies on the reputation of the scandalised opponent. An analysis of German-speaking anti-corporate campaign websites shows that nearly all campaigns use some sort of culture jamming as part of their symbolic politics. They also frequently offer local support groups the opportunity to illustrate local activities by uploading digital photos and videos to the net. These visual documentations of picket lines in front of shops or other more spectacular local events function as crucial links between the virtual and physical sphere of consumerist campaigns. As mentioned above, discursive participation on the net is usually rather limited and

11. Often, crucial information on norm violations of companies is revealed by current or former employees. In particular, this rather vulnerable group of labour activists is encouraged by the anonymity of the net to leak company secrets, like for instance, the threat of plant closures, controversial foreign investments, or environmental production risks. An illustrative example of this labour based anti-corporate criticism by company employees on the net is the website of Alliance@IBM, the official national site for the IBM Employees' Union CWA Local 1701, AFL-CIO http://www.allianceibm.org/ . Furthermore, campaigns against poor labour conditions in discounters like Lidl often draw their information from former or present employees, as for instance the Lidl-weblog of the services union ver.di shows.

consumer netizens' activities are mainly reduced to standardised virtual protest actions like writing emails and signing electronic petitions and to contributing to consumer guides and background information; more radical forms like hacking or blocking websites are rather rare exceptions in the repertoire of consumerist campaigns. Being encouraged to visually document local protest action does not make up for this lack of dialogue on aims and overall strategies of campaigns; however, it gives local supporters a feeling of significance: as has been pointed out in the beginning, political consumerism is more media than market-related today because political activists who are willing to spend much of their spare-time marching in the street and organising local events have become rare. On many photos we only see three or four activists bravely holding banners in front of entrance doors to local retailers and branches of scandalised corporations which could indicate that maybe there are only a few supporters in each town. However, the impression that a whole gallery of digital action photos creates is very different and seems to tell a "we are many" story, showing a great number of activists spreading campaign messages over many different places. Another element of identity building is the formation of support campaigns in libel cases, as the success of the often quoted McSpotlight website illustrates (http://www.mcspotlight.org). Although, US-based anti-corporate campaigns often focus their mobilisation on lawsuits that often attract a lot of mass media attention, it seems that European and particularly German companies have learned from US experiences and try to avoid lawsuits even if they would have the legal system on their side.

The net facilitates networking of a more decentralised kind than the practise of national or transnational advocacy networks. The fact that the large majority of campaigns are organised by advocacy networks gives evidence of the still dominant role of NGOs in consumerist campaigns compared to more direct activist network mobilisation. In that respect, the often quoted success of Peretti's individualist and direct network approach shows the potential of net communication; however, it seems to represent the exception to the rule. Mass media attention can be acquired through the linkage of the individual micro- to the macro-media of national press and TV corporations. Nevertheless, NGOs and their professionalised knowledge on the

dramatisation of street action as well as on meso-media management often provide the crucial link between individual net media use and mass media attention.

SUMMARISING

Literature on the political potential of the net tends to exaggerate its capability of transforming the political culture of representative democracies in terms of strengthening responsive and interactive modes of political participation. Great hopes to democratise political and social systems through technological changes have meanwhile turned into sobering experiences. Like the netizen in general, the netizen consumer can benefit from the net when it comes to gathering and spreading information and collaborating with other netizens. However, the active, interactive side of internet use is still underdeveloped, at least as far as the evidence of German anti-corporate campaigns is concerned. Thus consumerist action campaigns run the risk of being merely activism and event politics: individual acts of consumption need deliberative practices in order to legitimate consumption preferences and thus to contribute to a strengthening of civil society.

Mainly due to the still prevailing contradiction between the network and the campaign logic of protest mobilisation, the asymmetry between organisations and individual supporters has not been significantly diminished in political consumerism since the introduction of new ICTs: the individual activities of netizen consumers are still mostly steered by organisational centres (Bieber & Lamla 2005, 70) of advocacy networks. Thus the example of Jonah Peretti serves more as a kind of cybermyth among academics and political activists than as a representative example of the majority of consumerist action mobilisations.

A strength of current political consumerism lies in the diversity of action networks, as it allows individual and organisational collaboration beyond sectional borders of new and old social movement actors as well as beyond spatial limitations. However, the heterogeneity also results in problems of visibility and political influence: the current debate within social forums is also applicable to consumer activist

networks (see debate in Civil Society Yearbook 2005/6). Who speaks for whom in political consumerism? What are the common goals or consumption models beyond "relaxed frames" of global social rights? These questions are not only strategically important. Giving preference to high profile campaigning or horizontal networking and political participation of activists is also a crucial question of political legitimacy of political consumerism. NGO based campaigning draws political legitimacy most of all from the expertise, experience and credibility of NGOs as well as their accountability towards members and sponsors. Direct activism in horizontal networks has the advantage of a broader public participation (c.f. Häyhtiö & Rinne and Rättilä in this volume). However, it lacks any accountability towards a wider public. In both cases the question of representation, which is a crucial question of liberal democracy, remains unsolved. As this chapter has mainly focussed on the impact of new ICTs on consumer agency in general and political consumerism in particular the problem of political legitimacy can not be dealt with in depth here. However, looking for the answer along the described tension between high profile campaigning and horizontal networking seems to be a fruitful analytical perspective for future research.

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TAPIO HÄYHTIÖ & JARMO RINNE[1]

Temporal dimensions of reflexive Net-politics: Politicking on the Internet with monsters

INTRODUCTION

Our interest is to study emerging individualising political participation and activity on the Internet by analysing Finnish Net-protest campaigning mobilised against gossip journalism in May 2006. We contend that the case provides useful insights into the dynamics, patterns of change and the variety of political activity taking place on the Internet. Methodologically, we combine case material with research literature to build a theoretical framework in which individualising citizen initiated net-politics can be analysed. At first we set the case study in the context of *reflexive politics* (for the definition, see Introduction in this volume) that illustrates conflicts arising from clashes of different subjective values, lifestyles and attitudes. As we understand reflexive politics, it refers both to the politicisation of private worries and issue-specific questions and to political judgement, and to outcomes resulting in action. Therefore the term reflexive politics provides an explanation of intuitively and instinctually emerging modes of politics that unfold in more an organised form of action in the subjective process of political judgement. Secondly, we focus attention on the motivation of the protest refracted through the lens of a *political consumerism* perspective that is a form of reflexive politics. Thirdly, we address the contention that a central form of participation, acting and influencing on reflexive politics is publicness, which helps citizens

1. Both authors have contributed equally to this chapter

get political issues close to their hearts, and to enter a more general consciousness. The Internet is reviewed as a space of micro-public spheres, through which self-made publicness has become a vital part for both media- and political reality.

From the standpoint of reflexive politics, we also show how the Internet features temporal flow. To identify the Internet-based changes in temporality, we stress that temporal relations of past, present and future are the key elements in making (political) action possible. However, in a computerised environment the passing of objective time is replaced by the experience of subjective time, which extends and crosses traditional boundaries related to space and time. As a consequence, on cyberspace new types of *we*-relations and shared meaning contexts can be constructed; and in differentiated *now*-moments various types of activities may take place. Thus, asymmetric and asynchronous cyber time has an impact on the features of political net-activity that is characteristically more changeable, surprising and innovative than traditional "real world" politics. Our research case gives us an opportunity to study how a fragmented, complex, multi-spatial environment transforms the repertoire and forms of citizen-oriented politics into more individualised ones. It is setting the scene for the emergence of a new type of political presence, subjectivity and interactivity.

LORDI-PROTEST AS A PHENOMENON OF REFLEXIVE POLITICS

Our research case as a phenomenon of reflexive politics resulted from a peculiar chain of events, in which we witnessed the political protest that exceptionally related to the Eurovision song contest.[2] Hard-rock band Lordi became a topic of debate, when it won Finland's Eurovision televote selection in March 2006. It elicited a lot of conservative commentaries in various media. Overall, Lordi's selection was considered a sacrilege and the band was accused of Satanism. When Lordi performed with their monster costumes in the final of the Eurovision

2. The Eurovision song contest is a camp-spirited television spectacle, though it features some political aspects. For instance, the contest has been part of a Finnish identity-building project since the 1960's. The Eurovision song contest has also raised strong patriotic emotions in other geographical "border states". (Pajala 2006).

song contest on May 20th and gained an overwhelming victory, the Lordi-discussion went in totally new directions. After the contest, the leader of the band, Mr. Lordi, made a strong appeal to the media to not publish unmasked photos of the band members. However, they were published within a few days in the European media.

In Finland, after Eurovision, daily newspaper *Aamulehti* was the first to publish Lordi's photo without monster make-up on May 23rd (see photo 1). The photo was attached to an article that discussed unmasked Lordi-pictures published abroad. Next in Finland on 24th May, *7 päivää* (7 Days)–gossip magazine, produced by the Aller Publishing Company, printed the unmasked photo of Tomi Putansuu (Mr. Lordi) on the cover. On the same day, daily newspaper *Hämeen Sanomat* attached unmasked pictures to a Lordi-article. Furthermore, on 26th

Photo 1. Tomi Putansuu on the cover of the German Bild-magazine on May 22, 2006. Aamulehti (the second largest newspaper in Finland) published the photo.

May *Katso!* (Look!) -gossip magazine, also by the Aller Company, printed the unmasked photos of the rest of the band. (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007a, Wikipedia: Lordi.) In the following analysis we refer to the gossip magazines *7 Days* and *Look!* with English translations. The Finnish print media, in publishing the unmasked photos of national hero Lordi, caused a reflexive shock reaction among citizens, who were swept up in a surge of emotion stemming from the Eurovision song contest victory. People went on the Internet to express their feelings of

disappointment and anger. Suddenly the Lordi-photos were the subject of thousands of raging net-discussions. The online-discussions caused a web-protest emerging from micro-publics and targeting the press. (Digitoday 24.5.2006; Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007a.) The protest ranged from swarming[3] to an individualised collective network employing creative styles of resistance (cf. Arquilla & Ronfeldt 2001, 12-13). The Lordi-campaign was very intensive in many respects although it lasted only a few days at the end of May 2006.

In the Lordi-case, *Boycott 7 Days–magazine* –petition caused the most massive swarming on the Net. The aim of the net-petition was to raise to the level of public discussion what the boundaries of good journalism are in respect of personal privacy. (Boycott 7 Days- magazine.) A covering letter for the petition of *Boycott 7 Days-magazine* published on a website served as a manifesto of the Lordi-campaign:

> … [D]espite several appeals from Tomi Putaansuu (Mr Lordi) the magazine published a photo of him without a mask. Such behaviour shows bad judgement on behalf of the magazine, and also a lack of respect toward people's right for privacy. My greatest hope is, that by this petition we would be able to make the media think of the boundaries of good journalistic writing. Even though we have freedom of speech in Finland (most of the time I'm glad for it), we have got to draw a line.
>
> To respect another person is a basic virtue. This article and the showing of a photograph was the decisive act from a magazine that I have always detested. Say no to this kind of news- and money-making.
>
> By this petition I want to bring out, that everything is not acceptable in the actions of the media. May this petition help all those who want to maintain their right to privacy to some extent. Revelations could also be made within the boundaries of good taste.
>
> *(Boycott 7 Days-magazine*. Translated from Finnish.)

3. Arquilla & Ronfeldt (2001, 12) define that "[*s*]*warming occurs when the dispersed units of a network of small (and perhaps some large) forces converge on a target from multiple directions. The overall aim is sustainable pulsing – swarm networks must be able to coalesce rapidly and stealthily on a target, then dissever and redisperse, immediately ready to recombine for a new pulse*."

The number of signatures makes the petition the most important source of the protest rally. It gathered as many as 222 000 signatures in a few days.[4] Due to the enormous number of signatures, it was suspected that they would have been forgeries, but most of the signatures were later proved to be genuine (Helsingin Sanomat 10.6.2006).

In turn, *Boycott Seven*-site pleads for both subscribers of *7 Days* and other readers of Aller Magazines to cancel their orders. The site offered links to cancellation of Aller magazine subscriptions. It also served as unofficial news agency of the protest by collecting "protest-news" from different media sources. In addition, the site encouraged people to give feedback via links to *Seven*'s online-discussion forum, editorial e-mail petition and web-feedback form. There were also links to the personal contact information of editorial staff, a template on how to refuse direct marketing of *Aller Magazines* and the *Turn the Seven Upside Down*-site.

Before the Eurovision song contest, *Votelordi.org* exhorted European rock fans to vote Lordi to victory. After the contest the site mobilised a culture jamming[5] style of campaign, *Turn the Seven Upside Down,* which was changed to *Turn the Allers Upside Down*, after *Look!* published the picture. In addition to asking citizens to turn over magazines in their selling stands, it also invited them to send photos of their activity in the campaign to Yahoo!'s Flickr site, which offers free space for photo sharing. (Votelordi.org .) 153 photos were submitted by the end of May in the *votelordi's photo* folder (Flickr-votelordi's photos). The campaign turned out to be successful in launching a snowball-effect and "Lordi-copies" were turned upside down in almost every supermarket, store and kiosk.

Culture jamming also became concrete on the sites of *7 Days* and *Look!*, which were targeted by the virtual sit-ins, or in other words distributed denial of service attacks (IT-viikko 25.5.2006). Magazines had several server disruptions during the few days after the photo releases (IT-viikko 26.5.2006). The swarming multitude assembled on

4. The number of signatures is remarkable, when compared to the population of Finland (5, 3 million).
5. Wikipedia defines that "[*t*]*he aim of culture jamming is to create a contrast between corporate or mass media images and the realities or perceived negative side of the corporation or media*." (Wikipedia: Culture Jamming).

the sites of the magazines. Both constant page clicking/reloading and filling the discussion forums and feedback forms blockaded sites' user interfaces. For instance, the discussion forum of *7 Days*, was flooded with about 2000 individual messages on 24th May. The next day, the site webmasters made an announcement that forbade both sending messages provoking denial of service attacks and filling the forum with repeated inappropriate messages. The announcement threatened people with IP address tracking and legal acts if they could not follow the new rules. (Digitoday 24.5.2006b.)

The editorial staff of *7 Days* and advertisers of the magazine were also targeted by activists. The magazine had to remove staff's contact information from their site because of the jamming of e-mail-inboxes (MikroPc.net 26.5.2006). However, a Lordi-activist managed to save the extracted contact information to another site, after which it was linked to the Boycott Seven-site. In addition, activists e-mailed advertisers demanding them to immediately cancel their advertising campaigns with the magazine. As a consequence *7 Days* announced their intention of considering legal action against their "stalkers", who, according to the magazine, disrupted private business in illegal ways. (Digitoday 31.5.2006; ibid. 30.5.2006a.)

On the subjective level the Lordi-campaign highlights the process of reflexive virtual politicisation that starts from the moment of self-understanding. An individual realises and constructs a particular type of consistent identity where authenticity and autonomy are elements of the integrity (see Heller & Fehér 1988, 42). For many people the victorious hard-rock band stood as a symbol of overcoming obstacles, and hence it was linked to their own personal identity-building process and to strengthening self-esteem (see Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007b, 348). Other like-minded individuals can easily be found on the Internet, and thus the formation of networks is straightforward and easy (Gurak & Logie 2003, 44-45). The birth of political groups within the Internet is contingent and random, but as an instrument it contains an enormous potential for any political movement or actionist network by offering the sense of belonging to people from different parts of the globe (cf. Diani 2000, 397). This particular potentiality of the Net should not be overlooked, because according to influential social movements studies (Melucci & Avritzer 2000, 509) the principle of belonging is

an essential part in the formation of any social or political movement, network, or group.

MOTIVATIONAL DRIVES BEHIND THE NET-CAMPAIGN

Even though the intensive Lordi-protest lasted only for few days, it also led to concrete results. Many of the magazine's advertisers[6] recalled ads because of floods of e-mails demanding them to discontinue advertising. Companies feared that negative publicity would affect their business. (Digitoday 26.5.2006b; 26.5.2006c; 31.5.2006; IT-viikko 26.5.2006b.) In the online-discussions a common topic was the cancellation of subscriptions to *Seven Days*. However, a chief editor denied in her notice to commercial partners that the circulation of the magazine would be in decline (Digitoday 30.5.2006). On the basis of civic reaction it seems clear that sales of the "Lordi-edition" were low. It is also known that copies were pulled out in some stores due to customer demand (Wikipedia: 7 päivää). Under public pressure both Aller-magazines, *Seven Days* and *Look!*, had to apologise for publishing Lordi-photos and promised not to release any unmasked photos of the band members without permission (IT-viikko 26.5.2006a). The protest movement succeeded in incurring expense and weakening the brand image of *Seven Days* to such an extent that the magazine wants to forget the whole episode. It has removed Lordi-discussions and the apology of the chief editor from its web-site. (Katajamäki 2006, 87.)

Networking activity offers an ideal form for reflexive do-it-yourself-politicking. People as individuals may express their own ideas, gather support for their own interests and deal with their own worries and concerns. (Bennett 2004, 144-145; cf. Lappalainen; Baringhorst and Rättilä in this volume.) In the Lordi-case individuals made their own choices to act on the Net by signing a petition, jamming web-sites, pressuring journalists and advertisers etc., although they did not personally know each other. Michele Micheletti captures this form of citizen engagement with the concept of *individualized collective*

6. Travellink (a net travel agency), Olvi (a beverage manufacturer) and Dressman (a clothing retail chain) suspended advertising campaigns. Further, Altia (a beverage manufacturer) did not renew its advertising contract.

action that characterises different forms of political consumerism. According to Micheletti, the market is an arena for citizen-consumers, where they may act individually or in groups. Personal concerns, responsibility-taking and subjective choices motivate the projects of political consumerism, in which an individual makes some choices; and when others make similar choices based on autonomous, subjective judgements, this activity will bring about more far-reaching effects. A precondition of the accumulation of consumerist conflicts is various public spheres, which enable the emergence of loose networks around politicised issues. (Micheletti 2003, 14-36.)

The creative Lordi-campaign demonstrates that ad hoc-publics on the Net may be crucial for the politicisation of everyday-problems related to consumption. The Net as a tool provides both the spaces and means to publish the political micro-processes, that is to bring out topics that are personally (subjectively) felt to be important and worth promoting. The net also enables horizontal communication and allows people to take on the role of political agents pursuing a self-chosen political agenda on these open and free spaces (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007b, 338). The Lordi-case features an outburst of more carnivalistic modes and forms of net-politics. It presents an alternative, pluralistic many-voiced approach in an attempt to unify the actors who come from different backgrounds (cf. Osterweil 2004, 504).

The Lordi-swarming could be understood as political consumerism in a broad sense (see the Introduction in this volume; cf. Baringhorst in this volume). Practising critical judgment - "*[t]his article and the showing of a photograph was the decisive act from a magazine that I have always detested. Say no to this kind of news- and money-making"* - citizen-consumers politicised the purchase of gossip magazines and the publishing practices of commercialised journalism on the micro-public spheres of the Internet. In general, political consumerism has become more salient on the Internet's public spheres, because individualised citizen politics and engagement with politics have become easier (Garrett 2006, 206; Bennett 2006, 105-107; Baringhorst 2005; Micheletti 2003, 23; Scammell 2000, 354-355) and traditional mass media may also be giving more attention to the net-public spheres (Bennett 2006, 111-112, 118-120; see also Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007a, 134). The individual self-expression, belonging to networks and build-

ing ties in virtual micro-places enable people to transcend the normal limits and constraints of politics (physical, time, place and material resources) beyond the boundaries of any political system (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2006).

The virtual civic meetings and acts related to the Lordi protest reflect the individualisation of political participation and action emerging outside the formal organisations/institutions. Collective experience belonging to a networked group emerges when something is conducted together. Even signing a net petition is enough to constitute such an experience. A collectivity - and empowered multitude – arises due to action, and manifests itself in the representation of activity (McDonald 2006, 212-213).

VIRTUAL CO-PRESENCE AND TEMPORAL FLOW ON THE NET

The Finnish Lordi-movement shows how issue-specific episodes can politicise in the mediascape. In previously mentioned net-meetings, or discursive jam-sessions, Lordi-citizens opened up an arena, in which they rather soon realised they faced a shared problem, and they developed a free, horizontal, and open space for political action (cf. Garrett 2006, 211; Osterweil 2004, 496). A thoroughly commercialised press was considered as a rude actor who in its greed for earning more profits leaves such questions as people's right for privacy unattended. It is noteworthy that gossip magazines and the notorious *Aller Publishing Company* were attacked by Lordi-activists more intensively than daily newspapers, which managed to avoid the most passionate protest actions. The publication policy of *7 Days* was the main subject on various Finnish online discussion forums after the release of the Lordi-photos. There were flaming debates on justifications to publish the photos and the magazine's self-interest in maximising economic profits. Online discussion forums also spread links and information on forms of action that were considered useful in protesting about the gossip magazines and the *Aller Company*.

From the de-medialised point of view, the crossing of spheres can be facilitated by computer-mediated communication, enter-button or mouse-clicking. The public deliberations of the micro sphere

may even enter the macro-sphere by bringing about a"snowball-effect" which means the acceleration and accumulation of intensity of a controversial issue. Such a feature of the Internet has been taken advantage of in many politicised conflicts.[7] The capability of political communication to permeate the levels of public spheres also brings forth the question of the communication tactics of reflexive politics (cf. Meikle 2002, 121). Computer-mediated communication enables the offering of information on a more individualised basis, exploiting time and opportunities and targeting special groups, which are vital to the forms of reflexive politics founding their activity on horizontal communication. The Lordi-case manifests in detail the strengthened power of narrowcasting in relation to broadcasting in today's citizen-oriented politics. Magazines were blamed for infringing subjective values and the personal right to privacy. The reason *Seven Days* was the main target of the campaign shows that for many people the magazine represented the most unpleasant features of gossip journalism (see Boycott 7 Days–magazine).

The whole protest was initiated by citizens, and it proceeded self-reflexively through on-line forums from person to person, from below and horizontally. As an interactive media the Internet could challenge and on some occasions even replace the centralised (and sometimes controlled or else censored) mass media by offering independent alternative information about the world's events (for this, see Paltemaa in this volume). As a channel of participation, action or mobilisation, it is going to have a huge impact on the content of the notion of political action (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2006).

As the Lordi-protest demonstrates, reflexive DIY-politicking has altered the notion of proper or relevant political activity (cf. Lappalainen; Baringhorst and Rättilä in this volume). It has challenged the traditional (often named institutionalised) political understanding of how and where political activity and participation can emerge (an

7. Well known cases are among others the emergence of the local stuggle of the *Zapatista*-movement as the symbol of Internet resistance (Zapatistas Discussion Group) and the publication of the email exchange of Jonah Peretti (see Baringhorst in this volume) with the sports equipment manufacturer *Nike*. In the latter case an individual consumer brought embarrassment to a multinational company and set-up the company as a target of political criticism with the help of global publicness (*My Nike Media Adventure*)

interesting example of this newly emerged politicisation and politicking is so called net-piratism, see Hintikka in this volume). It has dwindled the old distinction of a left-right-continuum and made it insignificant, as it has done to those dichotomies concerning private versus public-debates. Individual subjective judgments are the corner-stones of reflexive politics, which means an almost infinite growth of personal policymaking in which personal autonomy plays a crucial part. Thus, in some respects, it seems that *personal is still political* in general, *but political is personal* in particular. (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2006; Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007b.) Easy, flexible, and informal access to de-medialised arenas for political involvement is what people are seeking nowadays. In individualised social reality - subjective values, life-style, attitudes, and motives are more and more steering the willingness and scope of political activity and especially the motives of participation. Anybody's attempt to control one's own life will turn into a political process, when the issue gains broader attention and resonates in a public group of likeminded people who are ready and eager to fight for their right to be (subjectively) right (ibid.; cf. Micheletti 2003, 22).

The most intensive phase of the Lordi-protest was at the end of May. In June the different forms of the protest quickly faded away. The last signature on the *Boycott 7 Days*-petition is dated May 28th when signature-collecting was discontinued. The "news" content of the *Boycott Seven*-site was released during the time period of May 24th - 31st. The photos of *Turn the Seven Upside Down/Turn the Allers Upside Down*-campaign were not submitted anymore on the *Flickr*-site in June. The online-forums of *Finland24.fi* -site were the most active forums for the Lordi-protest with thousands of comments. The intensity of swarming was clearly distinguished from the discussions in March and June. The attached tables represent the proportion of messages sent to two discussion forums. The information originates from the public statistics of *Finland24.fi*, which registers the volume of discussion openings in the forums (Tables 1-2). One discussion opening may include a myriad of responses. Both online-forums received thousands of messages in May 2006. It is confirmed, that more than 10' 000 messages related to the boycott campaign and photo publications were sent to *Finland24.fi* in less than two days between May 24th-25th 2006 (Digitoday 26.5.2006a).

Table 1. Finland24.fi →Discussion →Music →Lordi:

Year	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2006			7065	725	60	37	45	13				

Table 2. Finland24.fi→Discussion→Music→Eurovision Song contest:

Year	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2006	93	35	1576	285	5062	108	30	23	13	6		
2005	43	250	16	16	705	11	3	5	3	10	31	5
2004	30	16	17	32	269	8	10	6	5	5	8	10
2002			15	43	96	6						

(Suomi24.fi→Keskustelu→Musiikki→Lordi→Tietoja palstasta ([www-document]); Suomi24.fi→Keskustelu→Musiikki→Euroviisut→Tietoja palstasta ([www-document]).

Individually steered collective meshing creates an actionist network and brings the element of subjectivity into politics On the Internet the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future may blur, because of the nature of the media. In the real world acting together requires co-presence, i.e. sharing the same space simultaneously in the company of others (Nowak & Biocca 2003, 482). The Internet dislocates space from temporality, and allows people to share the same virtual space without necessarily sharing a real-time co-presence (Zhao 2004, 97). That is to stay in certain places where their *being there* converges but their *now* diverges, as is the case in on-line campaigns and discussions. Computer mediated technology extends both spatial and temporal limits/boundaries of co-presence. On the Internet, there are no objective *nows*, the time is experienced subjectively. Access onto the Net to join the company of others is virtual, and the presence is mediated on the Net. The virtual social realms provide individuals with a chance to establish new kinds of we-relationships in a mutually shared virtual meaning context (ibid. 92). The co-presence might be temporally not-coincidental, i.e. happening objectively in different times. Blurred temporal boundaries make the political action on the Net more fluid with respect to traditional political activity and fits better with the idea that there are no single dominant or objective cleavages causing the

Table 3*. Finland24.fi→Chat →Music→Lordi:25.5.2006 ≈ 10 pm.

Topic	Time										
Are we going to burn tomorrow	22.18	22.19	22.20	22.22	22.23	22.20	22.20	22.21	22.26		
MTV3 ten o'clock news... 10+actions	22.18	22.20	22.22	22.23	22.25	22.25					
To the news	22.19	22.22	22.23	22.25	22.22	22.23	22.25	22.25	22.33	22.23	
CRIMINAL ACTIVITY	22.22	22.23	22.26	22.27							
Petiton-site overloaded	22.23	22.24	22.25	22.42	22.47						
Let's make Seven go bankrupt	22.23	22.25	22.25	22.25	22.26	22.27	22.30				
naive people	22.25	22.26	22.28	22.59	22.27	22.29	22.52				
NATIONAL HEROES	22.26	22.28	22.30	22.37	22.28	22.33					
Yeah, a new god has been born	22.26	22.28									
I'M GONNA BURN MYSELF TOMORROW	22.26	22.27	22.28	22.28	22.33	22.29	22.36	22.29	22.32	22.34	22.54
LINK	22.27	22.28	22.28	22.29	22.30	22.30	22.36	22.34			
To those who threatened to burn	22.28	22.30	22.35	22.32	22.32	22.43					
PEOPLE!	22.28	22.31	22.31	22.32	22.33						
That address of the petition	22.29	22.30	22.31								
WHERE DO I GET SEVEN T-SHIRTS?	22.30	22.31	22.33	22.40	22.32	22.37	22.43	22.58			
SEVEN WAS FIRST	22.30	22.31	22.31	22.32	22.34	22.35	22.39	00.19	22.46	22.08	22.07
Yeah right	22.31	22.33									
For real!!!	22.31	22.33	22.35	22.40	22.41						
Great, Seven!	22.31	22.33	22.36	22.33	22.34	22.35	22.44	22.44	22.44		
How to get revenge on the publishers of the photos	22.34	22.43									
NEW CHRIST/ANTICHRIST!!	22.35	22.38	22.38	22.40	22.40	22.41	22.44	22.57			
No ads to the Aller Magazines	22.36	23.23									
Cancel your seven subscription	22.37										
BOYCOTT	22.37	22.41									
Situation at 9 pm.	22.38	22.39	22.40								
Ten points to MTV3!	22.38	22.39	22.40	22.45							
as I told	22.41	22.43	22.47								
Tomorrow I'm gonna cancel my Seven subscription	22.42	22.43	22.44	22.50	22.52	22.55	23.01				
Tomorrow I'm gonna subscribe to Seven	22.43	22.47									
Come on PEOPLE!	22.43	22.45	22.46								
Let's change the World	22.43	22.45	22.46	22.48	23.05	22.47	22.52	22.49	22.50	23.04	
As I told	22.44	22.46	22.51	22.45	22.54						
LORDI'S APPEAL	22.45	22.46	22.49	22.52							
REVENGING TOMORROW?	22.46	22.48									
IT'S GONNA BURN AT SEVEN'S EDITORIAL OFFICE	22.46	22.48	22.50	22.55	23.12	22.59	23.08				
BOYCOTT –Seven magazine ! ! !	22.46	22.55									

*Topics of discussion translated from Finnish by the authors.

political conflicts. Rather politicking seems to reflect on and correspond to individual life-styles and so it is an important constitutive element in building political identity (Melucci & Avritzer 2000, 518-519; cf. Bennett 2004, 127).

The following samples from the popular on-line-chat forum Finland24.fi show how the blurred temporal constraints were crossed and polyphonic discussions transformed into a discursive debate being political action *per se*. Addresses, replies, and remarks that constitute the discussion were not taken in the order of normal dialogue, rather they quite randomly preceded and followed each other, and still they somehow managed to mesh around the topic in a sensible manner.

The discussion was intensive and topics were coherent, even though the participants were not in the same spatial and temporal locus. It shows that the Internet as a tool, as well as a virtual space, allows collective action, in which each participant may join in different times and tune their actions in despite of their separate locations.

The Internet as a virtual space radically alters the understanding of how time affects politics by stretching the understanding of the spatial and temporal co-location of two or more individuals (Zhao 2004, 92, 96). Up to now, politics has been considered as an inter-subjective social and collective activity which channels the interests of many and organises the pursuit of their own ends. The necessary premise for any joint activity by a multitude of people is simultaneous spatial- temporal co-presence (see ibid., 95; Zhao 2006). Actors must share the same space at the same time in order to show the power of the masses. Demonstrating, mass actions, reclaiming the streets, even voting in a parliament gain their effectiveness from this source. The crucial point here is; co-presence shapes both the lines and places of action. It constitutes a world as a place for politics[8]. This requires, of course, sharing the same place and time and synchronised actions.

8. According to Hannah Arendt, the world (*Welt*) is constructed through action between actors. In her own vocabulary, this is what she called *inter-est* (between beings). This inter-place separates subjects from each other, and simultaneously enables them to share the same spatial temporal space (Arendt 1958; Parvikko 1996; Segerberg 2005). In this space different interests collide and politics emerges through the clashes of plural opinions. To construct a world it is necessary that it is constructed at the same time between subjects. Nick Crossley (1996), for instance, claims that intersubjectivity itself constitutes a world, or more precisely, inter-world. In this inter-world intersubjectivity is possible when subjects are trying to tune in their act while sharing the same spatial and temporal horizon.

On the Net, however, demonstrating the power of the masses can be temporally and spatially unsynchronised. Every actor is capable of taking part in collective action at the preferred moment from whatever spot that has Internet access.

The transformational potentiality of the Net with regard to collective action and influence could be described as revolutionary. Earlier, collective activity was characterised by action that happens intersubjectively in shared space and partakers were by definition consociated contemporaries. Being not physically there, but acting at a distance through the Net co-presently, empowers such collective action that may consist of a single act done by atomistic individuals throughout the world (Zhao 2004, 96). It is no longer necessary to share the same place to utilise collective pressuring, or employ the power of the masses (as virtual sit-ins, e-attacks and the like so clearly demonstrate). Still, activities of that kind require very precise temporal synchronising to be at their most efficient. Yet, temporal flexibility expands in some other forms of net-politics. In campaigns, such as the Lordi-protest highlighted earlier, consciousness of the present now is not necessarily the objective now for all participants of collective action. The awareness of the now's temporal being, that is grasping the enduring present now as a temporal object that exists in time, could be different for each participant due to the virtual nature of the sphere of activity which is accessible from every subject's own temporal horizon. The participation takes place from the standpoint of a myriad of different present-nows because virtual time is beyond objective time, and the now-moments are asymmetrical in respect of the objective real-world's nows. A message could be sent to an on-line forum or chat-room, and it may receive an almost immediate response, or the response is given after a long delay. Yet, all replies and responses are, in combo, constructing a reciprocal sense of sharing the same place and doing something together. On-line-discussions constitute a world between subjects in cyber-space and constructed virtual space in which intersubjectivity[9] may emerge regardless of the limitations of being in the here-and now (cf. Zhao 2006, 462-463).

9. The nature of Net facilitated intersubjectivity and co-presence in cyberspace is, in some commentaries, regarded as being something more or less imperfect, compared to co-presence in the real, physical world. According to Zhao virtual co-presence (or tele-co-presence as he calls the phenomenon) is mediated and thus truncated

CONCLUSION

In current political arenas the role of the Internet is crucial. Various uses of the Internet facilitate different civic and individually organized networks and help to introduce their aims and strategies, and to outreach target groups and members of the public. Also it is more efficient to run the core tasks of campaigning projects, such as communicating with supporters, coordinating events in the field, organising crowds in fast-breaking situations, reacting quickly to breaking news, and gaining publicity for their issue. User friendly applications offer efficient tools for horizontal interaction and carry out a variety of forms of reflexive politics. The traditional publicity of the mass media is easily replaceable by self-produced publicness from the grass-roots-level. From a de-medialised point of view, issues may be approached just in the form in which message senders want. The effectiveness of the Internet is based on its' potential to empower that horizontal communication between individual and different groups (Dahlgren 2005, 155). Everyone with access to the Internet may try to participate in public discussions and shape their agendas on on-line forums.

The Lordi-campaign is an exemplary case of the reflexive re-invention of politics and the political that took gossip journalism as its target. Protest emerged on the Internet around the self-organised network which consisted of separate individual actors. The network adopted such actionist tactics that by right could be called individualised innovative resistance. The network's actionist repertoire include public appeals, boycotts, buycotts, sharing and publishing information online and on websites, the gathering of action networks, and pressurising the employees and commercial partners of the magazine by a massive avalanche of emails. Also culture jamming was playing a rather visible role in the network's actions (virtual sit-ins, turning magazines upside-down in the selling stands and sending photos of these events to Internet-galleries). *7 Days*-magazine held virtual takeovers and put pressure on the protestors by claiming that they

(Zhao 2004: 96; see also Williams (2006). For an alternative reading concerning the nature of virtual presence, see Marion Hamm (2005). Unfortunately, in this chapter it is not possible to analyse these various concepts regarding virtual co-presence (being on-line) and its' relationship to 'real-worldly' (being off-line) counterparts.

were committing criminal activities, but no police investigation, nor legal processes followed from these acts (see Digitoday 31.5.2006; Digitoday 30.5.2006a).

From the perspective of reflexive politics, conflicts spring up from the problematic relation between an individual and society. This is partly caused by a societal and global development, the shift from communal life to private life in which the sense of shared community, imagined belonging to a bigger whole, is profoundly changing the scope of the political (see Johnston & Larãna & Gusfield 1994; Beck 1995; Polletta & Jasper 2001; Bernstein 2005; McDonald 2006). As pointed out earlier, there are no single dominant or objective cleavages causing the political conflicts, rather conflicts arise from clashes of different subjective values, lifestyles and attitudes. Reflexive politics puts emphasis on the mobilisation process fostering the emergence of new ideas, world-views, and particularly the adaptation of political activity and participation to change conditions (Diani & Eyerman 1992, 7-8).

Self-made publicness strengthens the core idea of reflexive political action, in which the significance of do-it-yourself culture is as crucial as the resistance to centralised ways of doing politics. It emphasises activities that take place in open, anti-hierarchical, free spaces. One characteristic feature in reflexive organisation and mobilisation is swarming. Horizontally communicating jungle drumming attracts people to visit interesting websites or hubs. This multitude of individuals may grow into a politically effective force if they unite in one or more respect. In other words they manage, at least temporarily, to transform people from different backgrounds into a unified collective agent. By meshworking the swarming effect turns the plural into unity. All that is familiar from a Hobbesian standpoint, but in this age people do not unite in order to safeguard their miserable lives, but instead to express themselves freely, if they have found one or more interests in common worth taking action over. (cf. Osterweil 2004, 501, 504.) The horizontal nature of the Internet's participation and action culture is far more democratic than traditional forms of government. In free net participation at a micro-level and activities occurring in cyberspace all participants are, by definition, equal; they share the same amount of power regardless of their position in the "real world" and all they

can trust in is the power of their arguments or the tempting nature of their agenda.

The extended present, in respect of intersubjectivity and facilitated happenings on the Net, has direct effects on the nature of action and on the styles it can adopt, as well as the outcomes of net-activism. The asymmetry in time-levels between the real world and virtual spaces enables that these different temporal zones might overlap; i.e. exist simultaneously at the level of subjective time experience. Consequently, that could cause latency in the efficacy of the action; the acts emerging now might change the course of events after a (long) while. In addition, this blurred temporality, especially the extended present on the Net empowers single actors by giving them a potentiality and tools to reflect on and to alter the course of their action, just as single acts. To a certain extent, it is possible to go back in time on the Net, for instance to react to, or even change earlier remarks on on-line-forums and chat-rooms. As the case of the Lordi-protest shows, several asymmetric acts could create an exponentially accumulated collective action around the issue that was held to be controversial. In this case, individualized collective actors constructed in a temporal sense, an unsynchronised collective action employing the means and styles of political consumerism and had an impact on the course of events in the real physical world.

Transformative change in organising political activities is salient and ostensible in Internet politics, because the Net is regarded as a powerful tool to gather coalitions and organise mobilisation of any kind (Chadwick 2006; Dahlgren 2005; Meikle 2002). Communicative puttering on the Net may arouse peoples' interest toward acute political and social problems and may cause political involvement and may even lead to action. Through the Net, this is especially convenient; at the minimum level all you have to do is click your mouse. Googling, blogging, maintaining websites, Net downloading and uploading, producing the material on the Net, mobilising people to take action about something, and net-petitions have became more and more visible and notable forms of political participation (Micheletti 2006). All the activities surrounding the Lordi-protest are not bound to remain a single atomistic by-plot within the story of political influence, but rather show the direction where civic participation and political activism is

heading. The innovative Lordi-protest indicates that de-medialised publicness is increasingly crucial for the politicisation of various topics of political consumerism.

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KARI A. HINTIKKA

Pirates in politics – Internet piracy as individualised politics

INTRODUCTION

> "Denied topics and pirate versions of allowed topics were popular... The ancient regime made a fateful mistake...with the underground, where the distance between political criticism, low-level criminality and pornography was not great. This situation enabled activities against the system."

This modified citation from Hannu Salmi (1996, 77) does not concern attempts to control the Internet nor copyright content piracy inside the Internet. It is about the invention of printing and its consequences when books became available to ordinary citizens in the 1700's, and, before mechanical printing, the church had a monopoly on copying without paying any copyright royalties to the authors or heirs. Monks were the only authorised group to made copied artifacts by hand.

It is suggested, that current new technologies and innovations will dramatically change the work-intensive model of contemporary associations (e.g. Webster 2001). Formed in 2006 and 2007, Swedish Piratpartiet (The Pirate Party) and the Finnish movements Tietoyhteiskuntapuolue (The Information Society Party) and WikiPuolue (The Wiki Party) are examples of *network intensive* movements. They organise and mobilise themselves mostly with the existing tools of the Internet, create new tools and are framing the rights to use digital tools and content freely. Furthermore, the members and supporters observe and share the material reality quite a lot via devices such as:

www journals and forums, irc and instant messengers, webcams, blogs, video or mobile footages, hobbying multiuser network games, mobile pictures, to mention a few.

For this chapter and to create a case study about Piratpartiet (PP), I have used the qualitative analysis of Internet newspapers and journals and the graph of the www connections of PP created with IssueCrawler, which is an Internet-based network analysis tool. My purpose is not to argue, whether the content piracy movement or the 'fair' home use is legal, illegal, justified or somewhere in-between. The Nordic piracy movement is a contemporary example of modern growing social activism and individualised politics, where the movement offers a loosely articulated framework to individuals and groups for occasional action, and the Internet provides a powerful environment for those kinds of activities. From the point of view of contemporary civil society research, there seems to be the tendency that many people are acting and participating more in single, temporary, project-like movements and protest forms without further commitments to longer-lasting social movements than before. People have started to find new ways of acting besides ordinary social movements, associates and political parties in society. This reflects to the contemporary tendencies of privatising and individualising everyday life and a project-like collectivity at the same time. Beside the Internet movements described above, other recent examples of the new forms of Internet action are uncoordinated crowds – or network mobs– the effective targeting of corporations, governments, political parties, public officials etc. (See Introduction in this volume.)

THE INTERNET AS THE IDENTITY MEGAPLEX

The main reason for studying the Nordic Internet piracy movement is that it offers a clear example of a new social movement (NSM), which mobilises and organises itself mostly on the Internet. Since 1994 after the Zapatista movement started the active use of the Internet with its supporters (Garrido & Halavais 2003), the Internet has become a versatile and everyday toolkit for all NSMs (see Mosca; Gillan; Vromen and Baringhorst in this volume). But to the Nordic piracy movement the Internet is also an arena for its actions, its publicity and the spatial

location of its targets or opponents. The other layers of reality, like media publicity and physical space, are regarded as important but secondary. On the other hand groups such as the European NSMs of the younger generations like Reclaim The Streets or the annual Euromayday of the so-called precariate, still operate mainly in physical time and space.

The Swedish-originated Piratpartiet movement spread to almost twenty countries in four continents in various forms during 2006. There has been wide network-based content piracy around the world for decades, but PP has been the first attempt by the pirates to come out publicly and broadly with the democratic repertoire for demanding the legalisation to share and copy freely copyrighted commercial content and patented ideas. Nordic pirate movements formed an alliance *The Pro Piracy Lobby* and there has been active flagging for a global *Pirate Party International* unity also. The speed of the spreading indicates that somehow the point of view of PP has touched on some feelings among younger generations of Internet users, who are considered not to be socially or politically active otherwise. Piratpartiet was legally established in January 2006 and it participated in the Swedish general election later in September 2006.

The first copyright law, *Statute of Anne*, came into force in 1710, but before that its predecessors also had the approach, that copyrighted material should be stored on some physical medium or artefact. The basic idea nowadays is to protect the rights of creative, innovative and distinguishable (art)works. But from the copying monopoly of the church and hand-made artifacts we have been transferred to the situation of licensing immaterial commercial content via buying and owning the copyrighted materials for our personal use. We are also facing new situations, where digital and networked content creation and distribution meets new consumer devices, which enable novel and easy ways to copy, remix and distribute (Lasica 2005).

The idea of the Internet piracy movement is to resist the current commercial copyright and distribution model and not to pay for copyrighted commercial materials, like software, music and videos but get and share them for free[1]. The copyright industry considers it

1. The term 'piracy' has innumerable forms from physical and illegal product or brand copying to name imitation on www sites. In this chapter I concentrate on so called Internet piracy only.

tantamount to stealing. But there is also a longstanding way of thinking among many early-bird Internet users and some software developers, that many cultural innovations – like computer software – should be published for free so everyone could make them even better. This collaborative development of open software is continuously expanding - called *the open source* movement - and voluntary programming has created several successful and widely-adopted solutions competing with commercial products, like free www-browser *Firefox* and the operating system *Linux*. This juxtaposition between companies and cost-free oriented consumers is not so unambiguous as companies like to put it in publicity, and compared to many other laws in societies, copying laws vary a lot around the world, whether it is legal, illegal, not a legal issue at all or legal in some situations, like limited copying for personal purposes.

When NSMs and consumer-related campaigns start to transfer their presence mostly to networks, like the Internet, it indicates new kinds of possibilities for individualised politics (see Baringhorst, Häyhtiö & Rinne and Rättilä in this volume). For this paper the Internet itself can be described as the '*identity megaplex*', which has political and social offerings 24/7 around the year; very easy, light, temporary and half-anonymous participation, like clicking a banner at a hunger aid site, signing a www-petition, commenting on blogs and other content resources, putting a banner on his or her own www homepage or blog etc. A user can easily build and mix her or his identity from various movement offers like shopping in a mall[2]. This Internet-driven presence and body of any Internet-based movement combined with the effiency provided by the tools of the Internet is unfolding whole new possibilities for the allocation of the resources of NSMs and their supporters. Piratpartiet is an example of this shift.

Internet and network activism have been around since the 1980's, such as GreenNet (Böök 1989). There have been numerous network-based consumer campaigns, like case Lotus Marketplace 1990 or Yahoo / GeoCities 1999, where consumers organised e-mail protests against

2. For example, on the very popular social networking site Facebook it is easy to activate the *Causes*-feature where one can select icons from thousands of global and local campaigns, show them in her / his personal Facebook www-page and invite friends to join in. The ones who succeed in recruiting the most people to campaigns are honored in hall-of-fame-lists.

computer companies (Gurak & Logie 2003, 26-28, 34-45). As Laura J. Gurak and John Logie describe, these two – and most of the - Internet campaigns have been more or less centralized and coordinated. But in the case of the pirate movement, there are an enormous number of potential supporters. For example The Pirate Bay (often abbreviated TPB) www service alone has some 1.6 millions users around the world and there are very many more popular *peer-to-peer* networks[3].

Encouraging an individual to personal protest or boycotting is quite common for example among non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and consumerism and environmental movements (see Baringhorst in this volume). But the nature of the piracy movement and the skills of its supporters form a powerful combination which goes beyond the innocent identity shopping of just clicking www charity banners. In the case of Piratpartiet, a 17-year old Swedish boy mounted a DDoS-attack[4] and forced down the www service of the Swedish police. He just tracked the biggest image file from the www site, published the www address of the image on the Internet discussion forums, and others started to request the image file from www server so its service capacity was drained.

Compared to physical reality, the radical activity on the Internet is a much easier and also half-anonymous form of participation (e.g. Calenda & Meijer in this volume). With this combination of convenience of access to occasional participation on the Internet and good Internet skills, the pirate movement and its individual supporters around the world can be quite effective from the point of view of activism. There are also some other Internet-savvy radical movements, like Nueremberg Files. The movement hosted a killing list on the

3. Peer-to-peer (often referred as P2P) network is based on single and individual nodes (and computers), which for example communicate and share files directly instead of a centralised network with servers. The Pirate Bay is an Internet service which helps people to locate files for copying on the Internet. This kind of server does not usually have the actual and changeable (and pirated) files itself, but mere *torrents* or seeds of information, which locate the actual files inside P2P networks (see below) on the Internet. The owners of torrent services often claim that they do not do anything illegal because they do not offer the copyrighted files themselves but just these torrents.
4. In *distributed denial-of-service*-attacks (DDoS) a www site is slowed down so that it can not be used. There are many variations, but the basic idea is, that as many computers as possible request some kind of information from the attacked www service at the same time.

www, the purpose of which was to motivate and report on the killing of doctors who undertook abortions (Meikle 2002, 22-23). Anybody who sympathises with the piracy movement or Nueremberg Files can be involved in activism or make a statement globally and there is no physical body of the movements to arrest or judge but autonomous groups or even individual cells.

The third factor to study is that many substance-framed NSMs (Della Porta & Diani 1999, 14) or their branches have had casual relationships with hackers and crackers for almost forty years. In many cases, social movements have had the 'substance' and hackers the technical means. This symbiosis has been so active, that its own branch or repertoire of activism has evolved and also a school of social and political research: *hacktivism (h*acking and *activism)* (see Gillan and Jordan in this volume). The term was coined by username Omega – "*a longstanding member of the Cult of the Dead Cow (cDc)*" 1996 (Ruffin 2004, 1). Ironically, Ruffin states that hacktivism does not include www site defacing or DDoS-attacks, which are among of the most popular means of 'hacktivism' nowadays. *Defacing* means to crack a www site and mess or replace its original content, some times with slogans or manifestos.

The definition of hacktivism is not essential in this paper. However, Piratpartiet is the first time when hackers, crackers or pirates highlight their own way of thinking and agenda publicly and mobilise themselves via democratic means on this scale, althought there are many long-standing hacker communities and actors like Chaos Computer Club (Germany), 2600 (USA) or activities around xs4all (Holland). It could be said that hackers have tended to have a substance-framed or ethical need for justifying the application of their expertise for decades. Hackers have on innumerable occasions offered their skills in 'helping' against a supposed enemy like Iraq. One of the most recent excuses was the debate and riots about the Danish Mohammed-targeted cartoons, which 'justified' the defacing of hundreds of Nordic www sites in 2006. But after the public piracy movement, hackers, crackers, nerds and geeks are not only toolkits for wider substance-framed NSMs any more. It is useful to enlight both the beginning of this symbiosis and on the other hand, the birth of the commercial software industry and juxtaposition between the content industry and the pirates.

Organisationally the Nordic piracy movement resembles many social movements (SM) and political parties. In Sweden, Piratpartiet is an officially registered party with a named board of directors, regional contact persons and almost 9000 members at May 2007. There are independent but loosely connected educational and cultural actors; (Piratbyrån and Young Pirates -branch); very proactive radical action section (The Pirate Bay with its supporters); autonomous supportive and co-operative actors (like The Artliberated Network); The Nordic regional alliance (The Pro Piracy Lobby); loose international bodies (Pirate Parties International); eighteen affiliate parties more or less in the forms of registered associations or parties[5]. Piratpartiet also tries to achieve its goals and exert its influence through democratic elections and both the party and its radical wing The Pirate Bay (TPB) usually give statements in the media publicy with their own names and faces as opposed to traditional anonymous hackers. However, the declaration of principles of Piratpartiet is very thin compared to most parties in the Nordic democracies. It desires only to "*fundamentally reform the copyright law, get rid of the patent system, and ensure that citizens' rights to privacy are respected*" (Piratpartiet 2007).

Sandor Vegh (2003, 72-84) offers a versatile classification about the political activism – or hacktivism – use of the Internet. He introduces two main categories, whether Internet activism is Internet-enhanced or Internet-based. In the former case, the Internet is only used to enhance the traditional advocacy techniques. In the latter case, the Internet is used for activities that are only possible online. However, the Nordic piracy movement is quite difficult to classify or categorise in this scheme, because it operates actively in both realms - the physical society and the Internet – depending on the level of observation:

5. Piratbyrån is an organisation which provides news, guides and a www forum for discussions on file-sharing, intellectual property and piracy. It arranges events such as lectures, demonstrations and media actions. The name derives from Antipiratbyrån (Anti-Piracy Bureau), which is a non governmental organisation controlling the interests of content industry-based anti-piracy issues in Sweden. The Artliberated Network consists of professionals in art, law and research and supports visual artists when a work is confronted with legal threats and when a work is being censored either on moral or on copyright grounds.

Piratpartiet, the activism around The Pirate Bay or the supporters of the latter or the wholeness of the movement. One could even say that Piratpartiet is an Internet-based and reality-enhanced movement.

The repertoire of Piratpartiet and its independent alliances, specially The Pirate Bay, varies from classic demonstration in material reality and participating in national elections to the provision of its own enemy-free Internet connection and attempts to form a copyright-free country. Instead of Veghs typology of the various forms of hacktivism, Piratpartiet more resembles the groups operating via *tactical media* as Graham Meikle has presented (ibid., 113-123). Tactical media is an approach where media publicity is used as a weapon with surprising, controversial and creative actions and campaigns and also to offer creative forms of participation to the occasional supporter. Some of the most famous groups are Adbusters, RTMARK (pronounced as 'ArtMark'), Critical Art Ensemble (CAE), Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) and YesMen. Theoretically, the tactical media has its origins in the radical movement Situationists International of the 1950-60's. For getting a clearer picture of what kind of activism or the tactical media the Nordic piracy movement is, we need to observe its recent actions.

THE CONTROVERSIAL REPERTOIRE OF THE PIRATES

The Piratpartiet itself was formed in January 2006, but the events in Sweden[6] started to condense, when the police raided the Internet service The Pirate Bay at the end of May 2006. The original security camera sources of the raid were quickly distributed on the Internet and successful DDoS attacks were made against the Swedish police and government. Like many bombing strikes in material reality, an entity which called itself World Wide Hackers, soon claimed responsibility for both. It soon occurred that the attack against the police was coordinated only one teenager in ten minutes. The piracy movement arranged a 'real-life' demonstration on 3.6.2006 with the aid of some young wings of the traditional parties, the Liberal Youth of Sweden, Green Youth and Young Left.

6. Reporting of the events are mostly based on www news source Digitoday.fi and its over forty articles by Jaakko Kuivalainen, Mika Lahdensivu and Mika Mannila.

The Pirate Bay moved its activities and www servers briefly to Holland, but quickly back to Sweden. The administrative copyright instrument in Sweden, Antipiratbyrån, and its lawyer got some severe warnings, but the lawyer took them with humour. Soon after the raid, the membership of Piratpartiet increased from 2 200 to 6 100. One image backslash to PP was that its own member list flooded the Internet with thousands of names. Slightly ironical here was speculation, over whether someone had cracked the servers of the pirates (Digitoday 2006.)

The raid caused national debate in Sweden. Miljöpartiet de Gröna (The Green Party of Sweden) and the leaders of Moderaterna (The Moderate Party) and Vänsterpartiet (The Swedish Left Party) strongly critisised the government and its policy over the whole filesharing issue. The Pirate Bay case and its implications thus gave some popular support to Piratpartiet. The Swedish government got a memo in the middle of June for getting rid of Internet piracy. After debate, two suggestions were broadly considered: one was a broadband fee, like for C-cassettes, without tightening the law, and the other was a new national network guard unit and specialised prosecutors. The latter could be some kind of national body, which could be linked to the police and the crisis management officials. Here we see two national and official approaches. One is proactive, letting citizens do what they do and the other is reactive, for solving what might have happened and punishing the perpetrators.

The Swedish mass media found out, that there were mysterious and possibly criminal, racist or sex industry grey money streams and huge economic revenues linked to the commercial ads (banners) on The Pirate Bay and that the streams were leading to a Swiss offshore company. So maybe the running of the swapping servers with only information about the actual files was not as ethical as explained or thought only. TPB admitted the money streams, and some speculated that this commercialism of activism might be the main possible prosecuting reason, not the piracy itself under Swedish law. On the other hand, the Swedish media introduced several Swedish officials, who think downloading from the Internet is daily life and 'normal'.

The pirates created *tankafritt.nu* – an insurance collective for possible fees. The Nordic Pro Piracy Lobby was formed and Piratpartiet

started to offer a new service, *Darknet*[7], which promised to anonymise an individual user totally from Internet tracking and surveillance means. In P2P networks the half-documentary *Steal This Film* started to spread which attempts to justify the piracy.

The election of the parliament was in the middle of September. Piratpartiet got nearly 35 000 votes and 0.63 percent of votes but not enough for the parliament (4 percent needed). Among Swedish minor parties, its performance surpassed many others. According to the party, the next step is to try to reach the 2009 European Union Parliament.

In 2007 Piratpartiet and The Pirate Bay started to operate more independently. The ACFI-group around TPB started to collect money on the Internet for buying an island and to form a new sovereign country. They considered buying Sealand ten kilometers away from Great Britain, which has quite a colourful history in its efforts to be a sovereign micronation, but the owners of Sealand did not respond to efforts to negotiate. Soon TPB announced details about the new www service Playble. The idea is that people can transfer songs to the service and the artists would be paid. In May 2007, someone cracked TPB, and flooded the Internet with 1.6 million names of the users of the service.

Somehow The Pirate Bay tested its limits and supporter potential in May 2007. A Danish www service provider decided to end the hosting of a pedophilian www site but the Swedish www hosting company PRQ, owned by creators of TPB Gottfrid Svartholm Warg and Fredrik Neij, provided the host name www domain Pedofil.se in the name of freedom of speech. For example in Finnish www forums the reactions have been quite mixed.

This commentary from The Pirate Bay is essential due to its thin substance framing. Supposedly the idea of free speech among the pirates and supporters has been some kind of phrase without any acid test (see

7. The term darknet originally refers to a closed and isolated network inside pre-Internet ARPANET and they were not visible to the main ARPANET in the 1970's. Later the term has also referred to tightly structured piracy networks. In the USA, darknets, 'pirate pyramids' or 'Shadow Internet', are the distribution structures, in which the participants have tight professional roles like business organisations, such as Insiders (sources inside companies), Packagers (release groups converting originals), Distributors (groups distributing items to topsites) and Couriers (transferring files from the topsites to lower-level networks, like P2P) (Lasica 2005).

Jordan in this volume). In Finland many comments have been similar to George W. Bush's comments on the actions of RTMARKs www parody site *gwbush.com* 1999: "*There ought to be limits to freedom*". In June 2007, TPB explained and specified its view of the freedom of free speech. It published the new service ImgBay.com, where anyone can distribute digital images at their own volition without censorship. In the site FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section they put their view this way:

> "There are a lot of ugly opinions out there, but demoracy ain't worth much without the right to express those opinions. There is this myth about freedom of speech being a nice comfortable idea, well it's not. It's annoying, appalling and sometimes even dangerous. But the opposite is way worse". (ImgBay.com 2007).

THE WEB OF PIRATES – THE FRAMING ANALYSIS

Based on the Swedish copyright law, The Pirate Bay has published dozens of examples of correspondence concerning copyright violations with companies from the USA on the internet, so it could be described as quite a provocative piracy actor (MPAA 2600). It was to be exposed in the Swedish media, that the raid of TPB was conducted mainly because of the demands of these companies and organisations in the USA, such as the Motion Picture Association of American (ibid.). Behind the scenes the USA forced Sweden to make the raid, which was prepared for two years, with the threat of sanctions by World Trade Organization (WTO). From the point of view of the pirates, the USA forced Sweden to operate against its own legislation and citizens on the behalf of the American content industry.

Piratpartiet has reacted proactively to the economic shift from traditional copyright ownership to the broader and emerging immaterial copyright industry. Thus the movement has social and economical dimensions. Instead of traditional artifact or item selling, the copyright industry tends to sell time-restricted licences nowadays like tickets to perfomative art shows, and at the same time includes more and more technical restrictions on consumer media devices. It means, that in

many situations at least in the United States, an average consumer does not anymore *own* or cannot for example lend or resell an immaterial *product* he or she has *purchased*, but has only bought a *license* to use a *service* with its content for a limited time (Lasica 2005).

Digital and networked producing, copying and distribution have not been the idea of traditional copyright laws in many countries (Hintikka 1993). The law was originally created mostly to protect physical artifacts in some form created by book publishers, patrons and individual authors, not for example for the concept of a cooking program[8]. With digital replication, the work-cost aspect of copyrighted content has loosened totally from the original idea of its creator and protection of the law. For example, for a concept of a new TV gardening series or www service there is, in general, a group of concept designers, who get monthly salaries from a company, which will own the rights of a show or service for selling the concept to different countries or audiences. This business idea is not to make individual and unique creations or artwork but just money in the form of the distinguishable content only. This could be considered as a "*concept industry*", and whenever a new concept in the industry is created, it will have poorer commercial genre copycat creations without payments or licencing fees to the originator of the concept, like in reality tv shows, but just a competition to license and sell formats. Copyrighted material is nowadays often a tailored creation of production investments and more importantly, an *economic asset*, for which protection is eagerly sought from a law originally targeted to protect a "product of the spirit".

THE QUESTION OF FAIR USE

The symbiosis between substance-framed NSMs and hackers has its origins in the 1960-70's on the Western coast of the USA, like the *Homebrew Computer Club* 1975-77, and it is also closely linked

8. A typical example is that some football leagues are sueing the YouTube video footage sharing service for providing mobile phone video clips taken of the goals in football games and distributed by paid customers during the matches in 2007. Traditionally, the copyrights of the images or clips have belonged to the consumer camera user, but now the copyrights are regarded as belonging to the organisers and the producers of the football games because of the potential loss when selling the rights to distribute games on the (pay) television channels.

to the rise of the computer software industry . In the universities of California there were many left-wing radical student movements such as those against the Vietnam War and the Cambodian crisis (Roszak 1992, 135-138). For example, electronical bulletin boards systems (BBS) *Resource One* and *Community Memory* were created there; both had the aim of being a "*free information system...without centralized editing or controlling of flowing information*". According to Theodore Roszak, some of the activists were 'guerilla hackers' e.g. 'socially aware' hackers, who have backgrounds both in the hacker scene and anti-war movement (ibid., 143-146). A fine example of how the interests and aims of student and hacker movements merged was the underground newsletter *Youth International Party Line.* Its first issue opposed a decision of the US government to tax telephone bills for funding the Vietnam conflict (Jordan & Taylor 2004, 13).

The beginning of the copyright confrontation and the rise of the whole copyright industry can be accurately pinpointed. In one hacker meeting a young Bill Gates demanded payment for his BASIC program. In the hacker culture the idea of a commercial program was unheard of. Programs had been developed and distributed for free since the 1960's. Gates actually created a whole new industry. As Steven Levy (1984) tells, the BASIC program was 'accidentally' copied in the meeting and started to spread as unauthorised copies around the USA, but it was also the beginning for the most powerful software company in the world – Micro-soft.

One of the founders of Microsoft, William Henry Gates III (1976) wrote an open letter to the hacker community: "*1) Most of these "users" never bought BASIC (less than 10% of all Altair owners have bought BASIC), and 2) The amount of royalties we have received from sales to hobbyists makes the time spent on Altair BASIC worth less than $2 an hour... Why is this? ...Hardware must be paid for, but software is something to share...Is this fair? ... Most directly, the thing you do is theft.*"

Naturally, one reason for content piracy is getting commercial products for free. But one of the main theses in the way of thinking of a hacker is that "*information wants to be free*". From the very beginning of the hacker era there has been the idea, that an individual would and should make his / her creative works available to others, so that others could improve the programmes, and everyone gets better

solutions. This is one reason how for example; the Internet itself was mainly developed 1970-1994 before it lured commercial interests and developers.

For example, the first issue of *Newsletter of the Homebrew Computer Club* started with the motive: "*poured forth in a spontaneous spirit of sharing*" (HCC 1975). The free sharing of information and thoughts - and created software – had been taken for granted among the hackers for some fifteen years since the first hackers at MIT 1950-60's before the first confrontation with BASIC software. Moreover, it is good to remember, that the whole idea of modern science is based on the sharing and referring of innovations for free. Roszak (1992) describes a picture of the world of a hacker (in the 1970's) as a "*weird mixing of political rebellionism, sci-fi literature, Do-It-Yourself philosophy and pure joy and play*". Also Levy points out, that hackers are fascinated with everything weird and odd, which give mental challenges, like trying to translate the different dishes on the menu of a Chinese restaurant, in the original language and without dictionary guidance. This characteristic and imagination combined with superior technical skills also makes hackers quite a different movement compared with many other activist groups.

As Gates put it, the copying of this first commercial software was "*stealing*". But it is easy to interpret that the basic thought of Gates was that piracy was not "*fair*". There was work involved in the programme and there should be payment for using it. But consumers for example in Nordic countries have, for a long time had the possibility of taping TV programs or music for personal devices and use. It has been socially acceptable for example, to make a copy of a copyrighted product purchased, for example for a friend.

The first reason for widespread or "common" piratism is the scale of the economic shift and the speed via networked tools against the longstanding business models of invention, production, marketing, distribution and exchanging (Anderson 2006; Tapscott & Williams 2006). From the 1970's to the middle of the 1990's, the content industry did not find serious problem with consumer copying of bought products, because of expensive personal costs and time-consuming distribution. The current problem arose in 1999 with Napster-software. Neighbourhood copying and sharing started to spread globally.

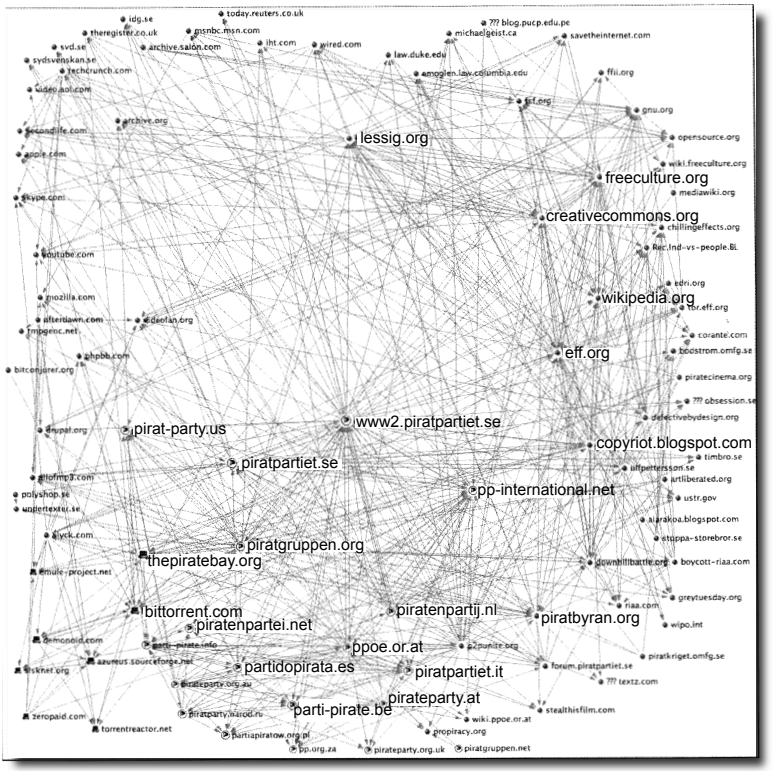
As Peter Biddle, Paul England, Marcus Peinado and Bryan Willman remark: "*In the past, most items of value were physical objects. Patent law and economies of scale meant that small scale copying of physical objects was usually uneconomic, and large-scale copying (if it infringed) was stoppable using policemen and courts"* (2002).

Another reason for this on-going confrontation and copyright infringement is the common availability and cheapness of digital content consumption, recording, creating and remixing tools, software and devices and developed media skills in how to use them (Lasica 2005). The consumers started to use networked tools in daily life before the concept industry got any ideas of how to do business with them. As Lasica points out, the content industry is always basically against new rising technologies unless it is a certainty that they will be more profitable than the existing ones. Younger generations and so called *digital natives*, have spent their whole life among the rich digital audiovisual and networked environments. The righteous consumers like to buy legally, remix, lend and borrow digital content for their own or non-commercial use as with physical artefacts. The content industry is creating more and more restrictions on the devices and software, lobbying tighter laws and sueing in courts and the pirates invent more and more sophisticated techniques to pirate. Now consumers and customers, especially in the United States, are increasingly in the situation that *they* do not have the right to "fair' use of bought digital content anymore. Moreover, the DCMA copyright act in the United States has led to several cases, where companies have declined to publish shady internal material claiming that it would offend their copyrights as creators of the material (ibid.). Thus, at least in the USA, the current copyright law is becoming a powerful tool, which is used to defend against different kinds of harm to the business.

MONEY MACHINE, SERIOUS JOKE OR TRUE NSM?

So are Piratpartiet, The Pirate Bay and their alliances just money machines streaming sex ads, serious jokes or true NSM? It is too early to answer, but anyhow they have had quite a deep impact on framing the copyright issue and freedom in information societies, at least in

the Nordic countries by means of the tactical media. Although their framing has been quite thin so far, there is clear reference about the substance-framing of the movement.
IssueCrawler is an Internet tool, which trawls voluntarily created www links between www sites, captures their pages or site www outlinks,



Picture 1. IssueCrawler network

performs co-link analysis, and outputs the results in lists as well as visualizations (Rogers 2006). It is an easy and efficient way to observe how different sites are networked or not together. When analysing the

connections between the www sites of Piratpartiet, The Pirate Bay and Pirate Parties International, IssueCrawler showed the network graph on the opposite page.

On the upper right side there are quite a lot of connections to open source and other legal copyright related issues. On the bottom, there are quite dense network and cross linkages between piracy movements and groups in different countries. In the middle left, there are connections both the piracy and open source software. Also, there are quite a few linkages to traditional NSMs. Based on the broad links of www services of the movement; the overall picture indicates that the movement is truly framing copyright and free software issues.

There have been many former movements and present day institutions, like Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), addressing the issues of copyrights or digital privacy before Piratpartiet and The Pirate Bay. But considering the mass publicity and their provocative repertoire and initiatives, they have raised common awareness that severe social conflict between the commercial sector, politics and common citizens is arising and also what, legitimate, legal, illegal, fair or justified mean for individual use with modern technologies in society.

CONCLUSIONS

The rapid and diverse formation of national pirate parties – in six months in 2006 – around the world in nearly twenty countries indicates that the legal and commercial struggle for consumer piracy has somehow struck a blow against (younger) consumers. The counter-reaction could have been abbreviated or channeled through traditional parties or NSMs – like the precariate – but this time pirates, hackers, geeks, nerds and crackers liked to do it on their own.

The Nordic piracy movement is an example of how a novel network-intensive movement can operate and it also reflects the deep change from material and location-based production and distribution to their global and immaterial counterparts. The Internet provides tools for the movement, the platform for creating new tools, it is an arena for actions and publicity and the spatial location of its targets or opponents. Compared to traditional movements operating mainly in

material reality, the mobilisation, organisation and repertoire opportunities of the pirates are huge and it is not based on time or country or location at all. Everything needed is on the Internet. Piratpartiet itself has no need for radical attacks. The Internet makes it far easier for supporters and sympathisers to act without being caught than in material reality.

One role of the Internet itself is to become an identity megaplex, where NSMs and social or policical campaigns are offered as products and trends like in any marketplace. An individual can easily pick interesting arguments and act via the Internet. The argumentation of Piratpartiet might be attractive enough to basically anybody on the Internet, who is otherwise socially or politically inactive, for making such an occasional initiative like a DoS-attack. Before the Internet, it was quite difficult, for example, to strike on a mini scale, another country physically. Nowadays it is quite easily possible to get tools for serious cracking or creating computer viruses like the attacks against the Estonian www sites in May 2007.

It seems obvious that the piracy movement is demonstrating the ways in which social movements could transform their work intensive resources and mobilisation into a network intensive version. It could be imagined that this transformation is being adopted first among the movements of younger generations and the youth wings of traditional movements.

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TIINA RÄTTILÄ

"Here's your fucking use of power!"
Notes on how bloggers communicate politically[1]

INTRODUCTION

Weblogs (hereafter blogs) have attracted increasing attention both in the media and in research. Some observers welcome blogs and other digital technologies of the *new social media* as hitherto the most democratic feature of the Internet (e.g. Lintulahti 2006; Arina 2007).[2] Others are more critical, taking blogs as a sign of growing narcissistic individualism characteristic of the postmodern society (see discussion in Hodkinson 2007). The question many theorists (again) tackle is the extent to which such media really enhance democracy, i.e. increase opportunities for free expression, participation and political influence as well as interaction between citizens and political elites. Many of the earlier Internet enthusiasts eventually turned hesitant, and even became sceptics. Today the promise of a stronger democracy seems to be in the air again; now in the form of the horizontally expanding blogosphere.

1. This chapter is an extended and refined version of a paper under the title "Politics on the blogosphere," presented at the international seminar "Politics on the Internet – New Forms and Media for Political Action", November 24-25, 2006, University of Tampere.
2. The term 'social media' refers to the new internet software and services which are based on user-generated content and which foster social interactivity. The term emphasises the transformation from one-to-many modes of mass-mediated communication to decentralised many-to-many, or peer-to-peer (P2P), communication. Such social software include e.g. wikis, RSS-feeds, social bookmarking services, podcasting, social networking platforms such as MySpace, Facebook, LiveJournal, SecondLife and Habbo Hotel.

This chapter approaches the question of the empowering possibilities of the Internet from a limited perspective, tracking how blogs and bloggers communicate politically.[3] My starting supposition is that blogs can be a powerful tool for political communication by merit of some of their defining characteristics: easy connectivity between blogs through linking practices which builds a kind of visible 'mass' to their political activity on the blogosphere (cf. web-pages with emphasis on informational content rather than on interaction), an easy publishing technology which speeds up and extends web publishing to ever wider publics, and the diary/journal format which enables multi-party, peer-to-peer conversation between bloggers. While blogs still have a relatively short history, they have already proved to be a phenomenon that no serious political actor, candidate, or corporation can afford to ignore (e.g. Einhorn 2006; Economist.com 2006).

I also strive to make an analytical point as to *how* we should approach communication on the blogosphere. As noted above, blogs have re-established visions of improved democracy by offering opportunities for free and relatively equal discourse between citizens (though much less between citizens and political elites). Against the background of such hopes stands the irrefutable influence of Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action and deliberative democracy and the related assumptions of 'rational' communication and the legitimate democratic process (e.g. Habermas 1984 and 1996). My suggestion is that this theory has always been somewhat displaced in its understanding of communication and that, consequently, it has tended to place unnecessary restraints on democratically meaningful communication. As I have argued elsewhere[4], Habermas and his followers have not

3. Like Brian McNair (2003, 4), I understand political communication in a wide sense as '*all purposeful communication about politics*.' This view includes three areas: a) all *forms* of communication undertaken by politicians and *other political actors* for the purpose of achieving specific objectives, b) communication addressed *to* these actors by non-politicians such as voters and newspaper columnists, and c) communication *about* these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics. It should also be noted that political communication does not denote only verbal or written statements but also *visual* means of signification such as body language and public protests.

4. Tiina Rättilä, "*In your face! On the nature of political performance as communication*." A doctoral thesis (in progress), University of Tampere, Department of Political Science and International Relations.

taken sufficient theoretical notice of how communication between people is not mere exchange of speech acts but relies extensively on extra-linguistic communicative means such as signs, gestures and sounds. Arguably, if we accept that without bodily encounters (real or imagined) and visual and aesthetic clues communication loses its meaningfulness for human beings, a linguistically defined model of communication is untenable even as a normative ideal.

In order to understand and theorise communication more authentically, then, we need to pay serious attention to its different dimensions, verbal and nonverbal. In order to do so, I suggest we turn to the analytical language of performance. *The performative perspective on communication*, as developed in the works of**,** for example**,** Erving Goffman (1959) in sociology, Richard Schechner (2002, 2003) in theatre/performance studies and Judith Butler (1990, 1997) in gender studies, acknowledges that various extra-linguistic forms of communication, bodily signs, sounds, and visual and aesthetic markers etc., offer effective even if often unconscious means of communicating ideas, feelings, even arguments. Performative dimensions of communication are well understood by us all, at least instinctively, in our everyday social encounters; not to mention skilful political actors and orators who sometimes command highly impressive artistry in their public presentations. Public performance has also been an important, and sometimes, the only available communicative media, in conditions of censorship and repression, for new social movements and sub-cultural groups. For example, the historical labour movement, the women's movement(s), the civil rights movement and, more recently, the anti-capitalist and anti-globalist movements have all been finely versed in performative communication.

The question of this chapter is, then, what happens to this rich estate of political communication when it turns virtual. Is there any 'body language' on the Internet, or inventive use of visual and symbolic signs? And if indeed such communication can be found, why would it matter for democracy?

I will start by discussing briefly some of the characteristic features of blogs as social and political media (second section). I will then move on to introduce the performative perspective to political communication (third section) and to discuss some of the special characteristics

of blog communication (fourth section). The main interest of the chapter is in considering how the performative perspective can be used to analyse communication on the blogosphere. Some outlines are given in the fifth section, and finally, a test case is reviewed in the final section of the chapter.

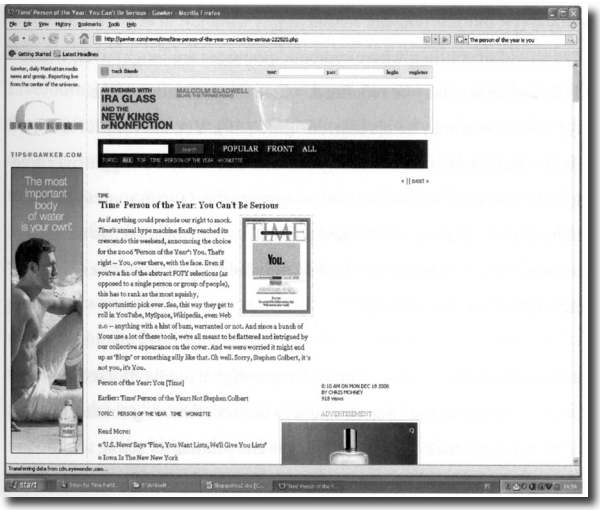
BLOGS AS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MEDIA

Time magazine made an interesting choice for the 2006 'Person of the Year.' It didn't pick Bill Gates (named year before) or Tony Blair (also a prior nominee) or any other 'Great Man' with indisputable political and/or economic influence. Instead, Time's choice for the person of the year was 'You,' or rather, all of us who use the new 'social' Internet. According to the Time editor Lev Grossman, the new Web is "*a tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter. Silicon Valley consultants call it Web 2.0, as if it were a new version of some old software. But it's really a revolution*" (Grossman 2006). The cover of the issue, featuring a mirror-screen with the imagined projection of 'You' on it, is reproduced in the blog below, where it is sarcastically commented on by the blogging community "Gawker" ("Time Person of the Year", gawker.com) and their readership. (See picture 1.)

Time's peculiar choice tells something essential about the development of the Internet at the beginning of the third millennium. Yet, its current stage is not easily pinned down by such hotchpotch terms and distinctions like Web 1.0 versus Web 2.0, or informational media versus social media etc.[5] In fact, the Internet has since the start developed in a complex process which has been influenced by various, often conflicting interests, visions, and technical solutions. As Chris

5. The latest development of the Internet is often referred to as the spread of 'Web 2.0' phenomena. According to Majava 2006, 90), Web 2.0 refers both to technical changes in the Internet environment like increases in rapid broadband connections and the growth of net-based software development, as well as to social and cultural changes in its communication structure. The latter changes the point to the growing importance of ordinary net users as the real beneficiaries of the 'net revolution', as Time magazine also recognised. The emerging *read/write web* is generating an information environment that is more interactive and multivocal and ultimately more democratic than the older Web 1.0 environment.

Atton (2004) notes, we need to move away from essentialised notions of the Internet and consider it, instead, as existing in a complex of features and pressures which are at once technological, historical, social, cultural, economic and political (cf. Introduction and Jordan in this volume). In this view the Internet appears "as a field of conflict, where symbolic resources are fought over, where citizenship and civil engagement may be redefined, where the predations of the asymmetries of symbolic



Picture 1. The writer to a group blog called "Gawker" comments on the choice of 'You' as Time's person of the year, in his entry on December 18, 2006. The posting includes links to Time magazine as well as to other Internet sources. The comment section of the posting (not featured in the picture) contains a lengthy discussion on the subject by visiting commentators. Like all posts, this one also has its individual URL-address (also falling out of the picture frame) which other blogs can link to when referring to this particular posting.

power may be rebalanced" (Atton 2004, 19). Yet, the conflict is not 'only' symbolic; it also translates as an adamantly political and tactical struggle over free versus controlled, and commercialised versus anti-commercialised (open source) uses of the Internet. It can be argued, then, that social and political communication has never been

as politicised as it is today. Rephrasing Hobbes, we could say that the Internet hosts thriving communication 'of all to/against all'.

Mark Poster (1995) has called the development of the new digital media 'the second media age.' While the 'first media age' was structurally centred, featuring (broadcast) systems of one-to-many communication with politicians and journalists acting as the gatekeepers of information and public opinion, the second media age is characterised by decentralisation, many-to-many (or all-to-all) communication, individualisation of media consumption, interactive technologies and more democratic opinion formation. Perhaps the most shocking feature of the new digital media has been the massive breakthrough of peer-to-peer production of web content (cf. Lappalainen and Häyhtiö & Rinne in this volume). Today the Internet makes it possible for anybody to become content producers and publishers, a type of citizen journalist. The net's peer groups can work much faster and much more knowledgeably than any institutionalised news room, as could be witnessed e.g. during the Asian 2004 tsunami catastrophe (Sirkkunen 2006, 56).

As part of the wider Web 2.0 phenomenon weblogs add yet another flavour to this constellation of forces in and around the Internet. Advanced blog technologies are central to the development that has brought easy and almost free web publishing into the hands of the end-users previously placed at the receiving end of the communicative hierarchy. Blogs have provided a much welcomed counter-weight to the power of commercial interests and financial capital on the Internet, in effect revolutionising (say optimists) the nature of communication in our contemporary world.

Weblogs date back to the early 1990s, but the first public blog service was introduced by *Blogger* in 1999. With Blogger and other service providers like WordPress and LiveJournal, the software quickly developed its signature outlook of webpages with frequent entries in reverse chronological order, blogrolls (links to 'friend blogs'), archives, comment sections, 'permalinks' (individual URL-addresses), 'tags' (words used to describe content) and RSS-feeds (via which blogs can be subscribed to). After 9/11, and later after the US attack in Iraq, the number of blogs quickly multiplied as individuals "rushed to describe their personal experiences and find an outlet for their heightened political

awareness" (McKenna 2004, 3). An interesting milestone in blog history was when during the 2004 American presidential election campaign a number of bloggers were accepted as on-site media representatives in the nominating party caucuses alongside the traditional media (Kilpi 2006) – which was a clear sign of the rising importance of the blogosphere. Today the number of blogs exceeds 100 million (or more) and keeps growing day by day.

While the bulk of blogs are maintained as personal reflection boards, many focus on politics too, though there is cultural variation in the popularity of political blogs. Posts on political blogs are often critiques and refutations of content produced by journalists, politicians and other powerful public figures, and they frequently link to other blogs as well as to diverse sources available throughout the Internet, articles, speeches, academic studies etc. The style of commentary varies from short notes urging the readers to 'go and check it out,' to debates with the readership/commentators and lengthy political essays. Some bloggers are motivated to highlight issues that have received little attention in the mainstream media because of bias or neglect (McKenna 2004, 5).

So far**,** relatively little survey data is available on the bloggers as a political constituency. A 2004 American survey among the top 125 political blogs showed that political bloggers are typically white, well-educated men who had participated actively in traditional forms of politics before taking up active blogging. This would seem to suggest that only a few non-elites have taken up the opportunity to engage in political communication on the blogosphere. "At least at this point in time, there has been no revolution of idea makers," concludes McKenna (ibid, 24). The survey also indicated - which is interesting - that after taking up their blogging activity, bloggers became less motivated in participating in off-line political action. This finding would seem to support the thesis that engagement in 'cyberlife' increases individualisation of communication patterns.

Political bloggers contrast somewhat with the general blogger population. A 2006 telephone survey made by the Pew Internet & American Life Project showed that bloggers are overwhelmingly young adults, that they are less likely than other Internet users to be white (60% were white, 11% African American, 19% English-speaking

Hispanic and 10% other ethnicity; of the overall Internet users more than 70% are white), and that they are evenly divided between men and women.[6] As to the 'consumption' of news, the survey found that 95% of bloggers get news from the internet and that the majority of bloggers like to gather news from diverse sources. Moreover, bloggers are as likely as the general Internet population to pursue non-partisan news sources: 45% of bloggers said they preferred getting news from sources with no particular political point of view, 24% preferred getting news from sources that challenge their own political views, and only 18% stated preferring getting news from sources sharing their personal political ideas. (Lenhart & Fox 2006)

What, then, is the existing or potential political significance of blogs? What kind of role do they have in the Internet's public sphere? To Drezner and Farrell (2004) the influence of blogs is puzzling, considering that their readership still does not match that of the mainstream media, that there is no central organisation to the blogosphere, that there is no ideological consensus among its participants, and that the vast majority of bloggers lack proper policy expertise. "*Despite these constraints, blogs appear to play an increasingly important role as a forum of public debate, with knock-on consequences for the media and for politics*," Drezner and Farrell conclude (ibid., 4).

For instance Michelle Micheletti (2006) suggests that blogging has played a major role in the campaigning and the results of recent presidential and parliamentary elections in e.g. the US, Britain, Finland and Sweden. Blogs have also caught the attention of the mass media and the business world, now eager to enter the playing field themselves – as witnessed recently by the acquisition of MySpace in 2005 by the media giant News Corp for $580, and of YouTube by Google Inc. in 2006 for a staggering $1.65 billion. The rationale behind these big-scale corporate acquisitions becomes understandable considering that MySpace has more than 130 million users around the world, and that YouTube gets around 100 million daily hits, not least by bloggers (MSNBC.com 2006).

6. According to the survey statistics, 147 million American adults used the Internet in 2005/2006. 57 million American adults read blogs and 12 million kept their own blog. In Finland over three million people used the Internet in 2007 (79% of the population, age 15 and up), of which around one million read blogs (33%) (Statistics Finland 2007).

Micheletti suggests that blogging is a sign of the times, proving that we need to take information-seeking, -providing, -retrieving and -interpreting seriously. Growing distrust in government, politicians, political parties and the mass media make information-seeking and political understanding "*more than just political foreplay for real political participation (like voting)*." Blogs enable a form of communicative participation increasingly important in times when citizens question the prefabricated information packages provided by experts, parties and organisations. Blogging also illustrates how "political communication and political understanding have entered the DIY [do-it-yourself] world." In the world of such politicised communication, the media, advocacy groups, corporations and even established organisations invite ordinary people to involve themselves directly in communicative actions. "*Political communication is, therefore, no longer just a way of getting across messages. It is action in itself that mobilizes and structures political thought and engagement*" (ibid. 2006).

A remarkable example of such DIY tactics is the growing use by 'citizen journalists' of camera phones and videocams to record off-line incidents involving visible misuse of power as well as other politically sensitive material (consider e.g. the Abu Ghraib -pictures) in order to expose it to the public via the Internet (for a closer review of such uses, see Häyhtiö & Rinne 2009). The last section of this article explores one such example. Related to this development Drezner & Farrell (2004) note that bloggers have first-mover advantage in formulating public opinion. The comparative advantage of blogs in political discourse is the low cost of their real-time publication. Immediately following an event of political consequence – a presidential debate, a terrorist attack etc. – bloggers have the ability to post their immediate reactions before other forms of media can respond. Beyond initial reactions, bloggers can also respond to other blogs reactions before the mainstream media has time to react (ibid., 16). Mickey Kaus (2003) explains:

> "[T]he virtue of speed isn't simply, or even primarily, that you can scoop the competition. It's that you can post something and provoke a quick response and counter-response, as well as research by readers. The collective brain works faster, firing with more synapses".

POLITICAL PERFORMANCE AS COMMUNICATION[7]

Along with the linguistic turn of the social sciences in the mid-20th century, the notion that the human world is linguistically and discursively constructed started to gain high theoretical ground. Moreover, in the wake of the influence of first pragmatism and later Habermas, dialogical speech and the communicative competence it requires of participants in discourse came to be taken as the primary normative ideal for democratic life.

Habermas's basic theory and argument is that communicative action is by definition linguistic and argumentative, and therefore rational. It is based on the communicative competence of the members of society, and it is necessary for maintaining mutual understanding and coordinating subjects' actions peacefully. In modern conditions where the dictates of money and power increasingly control social and political relations, communicative action is also potentially (but rarely in practice) pluralistic and democratic, providing much-needed basis for commonality and social cohesion between individualising subjects. (Habermas 1984, 397)

To some critics Habermas's theory has over-emphasised the power of language as (rational) speech. His critics have pointed out for example**,** that the idea of universal communicative competence rests on untenable gender and power -blind assumptions regarding human subjectivity. Another argument is that the rational-consensual communicative style tends to privilege speech which is formal, disembodied and dispassionate, thereby undervaluing expressions of identity, cultural commitments and emotion. There is also the inevitable question of power, as feminist and postmodern critics have repeatedly noted. Rational communication, they argue, cannot effectively address issues of power, because power does not typically appear as 'bad arguments' which could be argued away with better ones. (Of such critiques, see Rättilä 1999.)

Nonetheless, Habermas's theory is problematic on other accounts as well. Ideals of communicative and participatory democracy often come with a distrust of aesthetic representation, as J.D. Peters (2000,

7. This section of the article utilises ideas developed in the author's doctoral dissertation, chapters two and three (Rättilä, forthcoming).

563) claims. Habermas himself valorises conversation, reading and plain speech as worthy forms of democratic discourse and is frankly hostile to theatre, courtly forms, ceremony, the visual, and rhetoric. In Peters' view, Habermasian communication

> "is a resolutely sober affair -- an Apollonian principle, one of unity, light, clarity, sunshine, reason. He slights the Dionysian side of language, its dangers and irrationalities and its creative bursts. The term 'communication' invites one to envision the social life of symbols in a subtly normative way, unlike terms such as rhetoric or discourse" (ibid.).

To be fair, Peters adds, Habermas does appreciate thinkers such as Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt, who fathom the world-creating and political powers of language, but his purposeful reading of these thinkers aims more to rescue normative capital from them than to discover the complex and quirky side of their understanding of language.

But what is the danger for Habermas in defining the public sphere aesthetically? At stake is nothing less than the whole direction of modern politics. Given the Nazi aestheticisation of politics and Habermas's lifelong struggle against fascism, it is not hard to imagine why he resists theatre, rhetoric, narrative, festival or spectacle from entering into the political. Yet, public representations "*can be more than smoke and mirrors, more than Nuremburg rallies, more than ermine and purple*" (ibid., 565). Habermas's 'iconoclastic' stance toward symbolic communication both leaves us with an impoverished account of how communication in fact works and impedes the imagination of alternative forms of participatory media. This is an important point, when thinking of the evolving forms of communication on the Internet. Moreover, modern democracy is practically unthinkable without forms of social and political representation, both political and aesthetic, which mediate society for us. Modern media, Peters reminds us, are means for 'imagining community.' Our plight is only that the making of such public visions has become largely undemocratic and is left to '*the experts or the commissars*' (ibid., 566).

As a contrast to the linguistically determined models of communication we can consider the role of *visual* means of signification. Think for example about the conspicuously visible role that many social and political movements have played in Western political life. This point can be taken concretely: namely, movements have often strived to make themselves visible in the public eye. I don't want to say that only movements do so, however. In fact, to a large extent all political actors do. Yet it is an emblematic feature**,** especially of movements**,** that they re/present ideas and problems through public demonstrations, protests and (sometimes) through symbolic or physical violence**;** marching something like live public theatre on to the streets and other public spaces. This communicative strategy is compatible with postmodern art, or avant-gardism before it, which have struggled to challenge dominant ideas and practices from within the discourses of power, questioning overriding meanings and striving to produce alternative ones. Similarly, the core purpose of *the politics of performance* is to expose the realities of power to the public eye, to probe dominant cultural codes, and to deny overbearing political truths.

While performance has a number of usages in different walks of life – business, sports, the arts and everyday social encounters - in social science and critical theory it has a more

focused field of reference. In social scientific (sociological, anthropological, theatrical) approaches performance is typically used to refer to 'everyday drama,' and to the ways in which the elements of this drama constitute social-political categories and relations. In Erving Goffman's terms (1959) a performance is the pre-patterned and role-governed activity of a given participant which serves to influence other participants in a given situation. Here the stress is on the relation between the performer and the audience, that is, on the social context and the social 'functions' of performance rather than on the performer's own personal contribution to the situation. In critical and poststructuralist approaches the emphasis is elsewhere, on the possible fissures, breaks, and opportunities for resistance that are embedded in the performance's citationality, in the way the performer repeats or 'reiterates' the familiar and expected speech acts and gestures. The basic idea and assumption is that the cycle of oppressive social norms

can be broken by citing the given category – role, norm, identity – differently through exaggeration, subversion etc.

Judith Butler's renowned theory of gender construction works in the latter theoretical frame (1997). In order to understand what performance means in the present context, we need to discuss it in relation to Butler's work, and Butler's work, in turn, in relation to John L. Austin's (1975) and Jacques Derrida's theories (1988) of performative speech acts. First, Austin used the notion 'performative' to describe utterances such as 'I take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife.' In such cases 'to say something is to do something.' Promises, bets, curses, contracts, and judgments, then, do not *describe* actions; they *are* actions (Schechner 2002, 110). Performatives are an essential part of life, notes Schechner, "[*e*]*ven when the heart says "no," if the tongue says "yes" a performative occurs*" (ibid.). Moreover, since the primary purpose of the performative is to do rather than simply to assert something, Austin suggested that its success had to be judged not on the basis of *truth* or *falsity*, as was the case with 'constative' assertions, but on whether the intended act was successful or not (Carlson 2004, 61). Performance is successful, 'felicitous,' if uttered in appropriate circumstances.

This presupposition of the authentic performance in 'felicitous circumstances' and the implied separation between *non-mimetic* (genuine, real) and *mimetic* (copying, representing) speech was later fiercely criticised by Derrida. Derrida argued that it is only by virtue of citation, or 'iterability,' that performative utterances can succeed (1988, 18). A performative could not accomplish what it is meant to accomplish if it were not identifiable as a citation. This is the equivalent of saying that performatives, in being by nature repetitions, are 'acted', an idea that Austin and Habermas would most likely oppose. Yet, for Derrida, citation is never exact or 'pure' because it is always being adapted to new contexts. Any citation or sign can break with any given context (Carlson 2004, 75-76).

Using first Austin's idea that speech acts are performatives and later Derrida's 'correctum' that all speech acts are socially and politically ungrounded citations, Butler (1990) has argued that a social category like gender is not a primordial attribute but a category constructed in/through 'gender producing' performance. Moreover, gender is not 'done' by a pre-existing subject, but the subject is itself constituted

through the same performative acts. Butler also argues that since gender is citational, it can never precisely repeat the 'original' which does not exist to begin with.

This idea has been found fruitful for countering the power of stereotypical social and political categories. Namely, if categories like gender are reproduced by, and their force relies on, indefinite citations of performative acts, this power can be interrupted and resisted by breaking the citational chain. Butler's examples of such resistance include gender parodies like drag-performances, cross dressing, gay-identified dressing etc. which question the myth of originality and create new practices of gendering. Drag, for instance, might refuse the equation of gender with biological sex. The biologically male body outwardly adorned as female may denaturalise sex and gender by highlighting the distinctions between them (see Pitts 2003, 43).

Overall, I endorse Butler's theory, yet, would like to point to a slight terminological difference between Butler's understanding of performance and the understanding suggested in this article. To Butler performance equals a somewhat stable category, in that it is that which appears to be (or *is posed as*) the person's identity; it is therefore more an 'image' than activity (in Butler's theory performatives are the active, the 'doing' element). In my usage, however, performance is an activity, an event, a public 'happening,' and by nature 'politics of the exceptional.' The distinction between performatives and performance as I understand them is that the function of linguistic and extra-linguistic performatives is to fix meanings and thus to produce regularity and 'sameness' in political life. Performances, however, are meant to play with and disturb those meanings and regularities. Performativity, a related term to the other two, refers to a liminal space between performative and performance, to a moment when the performative ceases to appear 'natural' and is opened up for critique and alteration.

Performance in the sense I am using the term can be physical, visual, linguistic, and/or symbolic, or all at once. Performance is an act that 'reiterates something differently,' or at least iterates it in inappropriate ('infelicitous,' as Austin called them) circumstances. It regularly features some element that breaks up routines, catches attention, generates new questions and provokes reactions - acceptance, rejection or something in between. Here**,** ritualistic performatives turn

into politicised performances. Performances typically employ visual (often bodily) means to mark the difference between the normalised and the suggested 'other' representation.

Jessica Kulynych (1997) points out that the notion of performativity is important also for understanding the possibilities for innovation in Habermasian deliberative participation, which she claims Habermas himself is able to acknowledge to an extent. Just as protestors may expose the contingency of concepts like justice and democracy, a dialogue may in the end expose the limits and contingency of rational argumentation. Once we are sensitive to the performative nature of speech, language and discourse, we can see that deliberative politics cannot be confined to the rational statement of validity claims. Kulynych argues that,

> "[d]eliberation must be theatrical: it is in the performance of deliberation that which cannot be argued for finds expression. Indeed it is precisely the non-rational aspects of deliberation that carry the potential for innovation" (ibid., 334).

VIRTUAL PERFORMANCE

It is possible to argue that the Internet features specific characteristics which invite users to communicate performatively. The Internet is a vast space filled with content that competes for readers' and viewers' attention. In order to create interesting profiles of themselves and to express their identities and goals in recognisable ways, net activists are required to put up distinctive visual and graphic – but often also argumentative - 'shows' that can be likened to 'live' political performance.

The difference between online and off-line performance is, however, that in the latter the actors bring their showcase into an open space where they can be seen and heard by all. They are by definition *public* performances. The nature of publicness is different on the net, where it changes into a kind of quasi-publicity where actors can perform anonymously and hide their 'real bodies' and identities from the public view.[8] Scandalously to political conservatives, at least, this

8. For a qualification to this argument see the discussion at the end of this chapter.

feature provides endless opportunities and incentives for creative freedom by the Internet's 'communication artists'. On the Internet, one has to put all the more effort into the communicative performance, especially political performance, to make it effective. In this perspective, performative communication on the Internet need not shock anyone; it can rather be expected and looked for.

Net activists have found a myriad of ways to put on such performances, sometimes very annoyingly to those they are directed at, like virtual sit-ins and mass emailing campaigns aimed at closing down the targeted organisation's server and blocking access to its web site. Such DOS (denial of service) tactics are part of the 'electronic civil disobedience' artistry, a notion that sprang up in the late 1990s in the context of mobilising international support for the Mexican Zapatistas against the government's military aggression (Atton 2004, 20-21, see also Jordan in this volume). The performative, visually and aesthetically arresting, nature of the action was fittingly disclosed in the name of the group behind it, the "Electronic Disturbance Theatre", as well as in the group's decision to fill the government's log with the names of the people killed by the military during the Zapatistas' uprising in Chiapas (ibid., 21). Other equally famous, and controversial, to be sure, acts of electronic civil disobedience include the mass emailing campaign in 1998 against the French government in order to turn down the MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment), the virtual attack on the WTO's (World Trade Organisation) server during the 1999 Seattle demonstrations, and the aggressive attack against the government of Estonia's website in the spring of 2007 during the public controversy over the removal of the bronze Russian soldier statue from the centre of the capital Tallinn. The removal sparked large-scale riots in the streets of Tallinn and other Estonian cities, as well as a severe DOS-attack on the government website arguably by Russian hactivists (e.g. Finn 2007).

Häyhtiö & Rinne (in this volume) discuss another interesting case of virtual performance surrounding the Finnish 'monster band' Lordi after winning the Eurovision song contest in May 2006. The historic victory (itself a product of the Internet age!) was followed by a colossal reaction among fans against the decision of some mass media to publish unmasked pictures of 'Mr. Lordi,' (the singer) despite the

band's explicit appeal after the victory that unmasked pictures not be published. The decision generated an unprecedented collective mobilisation in Finland, including massive e-mail, net, and off-line campaigning against the media participating in the publishing act. The campaign also proved successful, in the end forcing the major target of the campaign, the "*7 Days*" (7 Päivää) -magazine to make a public apology to the band and its fans.

These are some examples of the numerous DIY actionist performances on the net – but what about blogs, what are their communicative styles and strategies? Blogging is a highly personalised form of Internet communication. Bloggers take up and develop virtual identities which in a sense give them a 'public face.' There could be more at stake here, compared to other forms of net communication, in so far as bloggers aspire to maintain the credibility and attractiveness of their virtual personality. Some bloggers become 'virtual celebrities' and may not wish to jeopardise their esteemed position on the blogosphere. We might conjecture that bloggers rely more on the power of communicative and literary wit than the more anonymous net activists. Or does performative communication play a significant role in blogs as well?

"HERE'S YOUR PATRIOT ACT, HERE'S YOUR FUCKING ABUSE OF POWER…"

As a test case I briefly hooked up with the blogosphere in relation to an incident which occurred in the University of California library (at Bruin, LA) on November 14, 2006. First a brief account of what happened**;** pieced together from postings in various blogs (the whole story is also available in Daily Bruin, www.dailybruin.com):

On the night of November 14, Mostafa Tabatabainejad, an Iranian-American student at UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles), was asked by UCLA Community Service Officers to show his university ID during a random check in the Powell library after 11.30 pm. Tabatabainejad declined or for other reasons failed to produce his ID (it is not known why), after which he was told to leave the premises immediately. He did not comply with the request. Although, there is controversy in blog comments as to whether Mostafa Tabatabainejad

refused deliberately or whether he was simply so engrossed in the work that he failed to react to the request immediately. The officers left, returning a few minutes later with two University of California Police Department officers to escort the student out. By this time Mostafa Tabatabainejad had started to walk toward the door with his backpack. One of the officers approached him and grabbed his arm. Tabatabainejad responded by trying to free his arm, yelling "don't touch me" several times.

At this point Mostafa Tabatabainejad was stunned with a Taser a gun which releases electric shocks, as a result of which he dropped to the floor, screaming loudly in pain. While he was still down and crying, the police kept ordering Tabatabainejad to stand up and stop resisting. He was also told that if he failed to do so, he would be tasered again. Again there is controversy over whether Mostafa Tabatabainejad resisted deliberately or whether his muscles were enervated so that he was not

Picture 2. UCLA police officers are pulling the tasered student out of the library at Bruin. Soon after video footage of the incident is uploaded to YouTube and starts circulating on the blogosphere. Eleven days later the video had reached one million viewers.

able to stand up any way. Tabatabainejad did not stand up and was tasered again. Tabatabainejad screamed and the officers kept telling him to stand up. Tabatabainejad did not follow the order and shouted "Here's your Patriot Act, here's your fucking abuse of power…". He was tasered at least twice more, also after already being handcuffed. As Tabatabainejad was dragged through the room by two officers, he shouted, 'I'm not fighting you, I said I would leave'. In the end, the officers managed to drag Tabatabainejad out of the building and he was booked overnight to be released next morning. (The video is available at numerous sites, e.g. at http://technorati.com/pop/)

Significantly, in connection with later events, a fellow student present in the library at the time of the incident decided to record it with his/her camera phone. The six-minute video footage, later circulated widely on the net, played a crucial role in the ensuing reaction of the blogosphere to the incident. Arguably, had the reporting on the episode been based on eye-witness accounts only, the reaction would not have been the same. Once on the net, the video triggered a quick and extensive response among bloggers, most of whom were shocked by the extensive use of force by the police. Questions, critique, comments, and demands for re/action flooded the blogosphere. Was the incident related to the US anti-terrorist home security policy? Did racial profiling play a role? Can citizens ever feel safe in the hands of the authorities? What does the incident tell us about current American political realities? The incident was also tackled normatively: In what circumstances is extensive use of force against citizens legitimate? Did Mostafa Tabatabainejad 'have it coming' because he resisted the police (if, indeed, he did)? Are citizens allowed to argue with authorities and defy them verbally?

What, then, does this test case demonstrate about the patterns of communication on the blogosphere? We can make several observations. The first is that the UCLA incident represents a typical case of political events which today find their way quickly on to the net and begin circulating and resonating there freely. As people now carry their mobile communication devices everywhere, it is more than likely that interesting and exceptional events are quickly forwarded to the net, increasingly by everyday 'citizen reporters'. As one blogger points out:

> "[I]n today's culture, police and politicians can't hide their actions as easily as before. Sunlight is the best disinfectant, or so it's said. Today's sun is the light of a camcorder or video phone. The people have the power. Use it."
> (Truth to power," blogs.ink19.com).

The new blogging technology has significantly empowered formerly passive observers of public events and processes, turning them into active spectators, interpreters and public actors. Citizens equipped with mobile, camera andvideophones, laptops and Wlan-connections are tantamount to a 24-hour 'citizen watch, guard,' many times with surprisingly effective results. As one commentator put it, "I'm guessing -- that the police involved in this are going to have a rough few weeks. Cameras in the hands of citizens may end up being a far, far more effective counter to police abuses than guns in the hands of citizens ever were" ("Here's your Patriot Act," nielsenhayden.com).

Another and related observation is the wide scope and practical influence of blogospheric communication. The blogosphere is a vast and complex**,** but at the same time effective communication network capable of disseminating information quickly around the world. In the test case, Technocrati found 638 results for the search words "UCLA taser" on November 17, and 2 084 results four days later. On November 25, nielsenhayden.com reported that the video had been accessed by one million viewers. Authorities and powerful political and economic elites are already forced to take into close account bloggers' actions and opinions due to the sheer magnitude of the 'World Wide Blogosphere' and the publicity it is able to generate on debated events and issues. In the UCLA case, several organisations responded to the events, including the university administration and police, the established media, human rights organisations, and the Council of American-Iranian Relations (CAIR). [9]

The third point relates to the structure of communication within the blogosphere. Compared to many other technologies, blogging and other new social media are highly interactive, thanks to easy linking functions. On the other hand, 'conversation' in blogs is somewhat

9. CAIR is an organisation defending the interests of Islamic people and groups in the US (www.cair.com).

curious; it can be directly dialogical as in "Here's your Patriot Act", nielsenhayden.com or**,** in the majority of blogs, only indirectly so when bloggers prefer commenting on issues on their own blogs instead of writing in the comment zones of other blogs. This peculiar conversational practice draws attention to the bloggers' own virtual profiles and visibility, providing accentuated evidence of what Michele Micheletti (2003) has termed '*individualizing collective action*'. The blogosphere is a collective phenomenon, yet not a 'mass' where each part would be similar to other parts as when sharing the same ideology, identity or political objectives. The power of the blogosphere relies, rather, on randomly shared common orientations – that is, on individual bloggers' actions occasionally coalescing into common objectives and campaigns, which then quickly dissolve when the project is completed. As a collective political phenomenon, the blogosphere undoubtedly challenges traditional political elites, who from now on have to learn to address and appeal to a very miscellaneous assemblage of individual voters and actors.

The fourth observation pertains to blogs' communicative styles. Bloggers like whenever possible to use tangible material to back up their comments and assessments such as photos, videos, podcasts, official documents, pictures, symbols etc. In the UCLA case**,** many bloggers attempted to reconstruct the events by gathering information from a variety of sources in order to construct a fuller account and interpretation of the episode and its significance. It is interesting to note that, in doing so, bloggers exploited both careful argumentation as well as various visual, rhetorical and symbolic means of communication.

Also**,** performative communication was displayed, both during the incident itself**,** as well as in the subsequent communication on the blogosphere. There the performative element centres on the video footage itself, which reproduced the event as 'a public show'. For example, Mostafa Tabatabainejad used performative means when being held and dragged in the library by the police, as witnessed by his yell, "*Here's your Patriot Act, here's your fucking abuse of power*". Confrontation, we may note, typically calls forth performative action. Here Tabatabainejad's tasered, almost tortured, body became a symbol of oppression of what was taken as unjust use of coercive power. Reactions on the blogosphere were so intensive partly because the bodily element was so strongly

present in the video. Bodies communicate effectively, they are easily related to and sympathised with (Gregory et al. 2002).

The police likewise acted performatively, as shown by their insistent 'stand up' commands and their coercive behaviour overall. Their 'performance' may have been addressed to the other students present in the library, or even to a wider audience. The sense of such a brutal performance lies in that it represents the sort of micropower or biopower techniques which Michel Foucault has described as typical means of modern power to control protesting 'political bodies'. In the current circumstances, where the 'war on terrorism' dominates American political discourse, such controlling techniques also have a prominent political role in domestic security policy.

Blogs per se, as visual and rhetorical representations, are rather rich in communicative elements. Think e.g. of the names of blogs such as "Horsesass.org", "Truth to power", "AlienTed" or "Nihilix". It is interesting that so many blogs and bloggers would seem to be concerned with 'revealing the truth', which are in themselves rhetorical and symbolic performances. Bloggers also use visual symbols as a way of creating, expressing, and playing with their identity. This is one way of 'putting on a show' for those visitors or 'friends' who may be looking. One further observation is that even though bloggers often trifle with the visual and verbal projections of their identities, this does not seem (contra Habermas's beliefs) in any way to prevent them from engaging in 'serious' talk and political commentary.

Earlier critical appraisals of cyberlife have worried about the potentially over-individualising effects of net communication. Their point is that transcending bodies and social differences over the Internet does not really do much to eradicate the problems related to them in real-life political structures and practices. Therefore the insistence of many feminist difference advocates that in order to be effective, resistance to existing hegemonies must be visibly present in real-life public spaces.

Boler (2007) argues, however, that the role of bodies as major social signifiers remains more or less intact in digital communication too. As an example of this, bloggers' personal profiles often include basic information about their age, sex, location, 'ideological' standing and fields of interest. Furthermore, only half of bloggers use pseudo-

Picture 3.
An example of a blog with clear performative elements in its linguistic and non-linguistic design of communication.

nyms, according to the Pew survey (Lenhart & Fox 2006). Why so? It seems that the credibility of bloggers as public figures with a virtual 'face' requires putting in such information, and this is the information most visitors seek any way to be able to relate to the blogger. Ironically, notes Boler (ibid), even in digital communication the body actually functions as a necessary arbiter of meaning and a final signifier of what is accepted as 'real' and 'true'.

Moreover, with the coming of the social media technologies the structure of communication on the Internet has changed dramatically from the earlier text-based modes. It is these social software features of the net which really seem to be thriving in the current development of the Internet.

This is not to say that blogs with and without video footage and other visual 'embodiments' would in themselves be able to correct real-life power differences. Yet, they markedly increase the net's com-

municative potential, and as such, merit much closer attention than hitherto from political researchers.

The above findings support at least partly, the idea embedded in the above critique of Habermas's theory of communicative action and communicative competence. Namely, my argument is that it is not the 'rational' and formal give-and-take dialogue that is crucial for open, democratic discourse. That is, we need not require that *individual* communicators be 'rational' and 'other-orientated' in their argumentation when partaking in public discursive processes. What matters is that the *structure* of communication is 'rational' (quotation marks here are intended); i.e., that public communicative processes are inclusive and open to all interested participants, that they allow different modes and styles of expression, that they accept social and political diversity, and that they make possible the production of new political ideas and public initiatives. The blogosphere, I believe, is one step forward in the process of creating such a structure of public communication.

The nature of the democratic culture the current electronic (r)evolution is crafting is by no means easy to define. Perhaps the best we can do is to say that democracy on the net is becoming increasingly creative, diverse, and messy.

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